

**Statement of the Delegation of Ukraine  
at the Working Session 7 “Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of  
thought, conscience, religion or belief” of the  
2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Mr. Moderator,  
Distinguished participants,**

According to its international obligations Ukraine implements undisputable principles of religious tolerance and equality of all religious organizations for last two and a half decades. Ukrainian law in this area was adopted 27 years ago simultaneously with formation the contemporary independent state. From the very beginning it accepted whose set of principles, that guarantee any possibilities for religious expression: among them, a possibility for any religious organizations to function without obligatory state registration; second, creating transparent circumstances for free option and free change of religious affiliation on the personal and institutional levels; third, absence of any forms of the state limitations or controlling the activity of religious organizations in their entire spiritual measure; fourthly, actual equality of religious organizations, registered according to the existing law, despite any differences between them, including formal and informal measures.

It is important to emphasize that many from these issues are the subject of discussion and even special attention, care and sometimes worry in many situations that happen in the area of OSCE’ responsibility.

At the same time and unfortunately, we have to stress that all these principles of religion freedom are terribly violates on the Ukrainian territories, temporary occupied by the Russian troops, in Crimea and some districts of Donbas.

All religious organizations in Crimea are forced to obtain the new registration according to the Russian law which is based on the repressive (especially after adopting so called “Yarovaya package”) and totalitarian principles of cooperation between the state and religious institutions. So hundreds of congregations have lose their possibility for development or even existence. If at the beginning of 2014 Ukrainian officials counted more than 2000 communities, functioning at the Crimea peninsula (among then around 800 were acting without registration), for now just several hundreds of communities agreed to receive new Russian registration.

Situation at the occupied regions of Donbas is even much worse. Appointed and controlled by the Russian Federation leaders of the occupation authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk are trying to replicate the Russian experience and implementing own special laws on religion that presuppose reregistration of the religious organizations, with the special accent on activity of, as they called, “totalitarian sects”. Because this term includes also almost all Protestant communities, which are very numerous and active in the region, it means that this

approach leads to blocking activity of Baptist, Pentecostal, Adventist, Mormon, Jehovah Witnesses, and many other smaller communities.

Among other accusations on their address there is an artificially created argument, which is absolutely natural for any Ukrainian citizens, that they are supporting pro-Ukrainian orientations there.

By the way, it's really unexplainable, but occupation authorities in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions recognize Ukrainian registration of the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate and demand at the same time "reregistration" for any other communities. It means that they completely believe in loyalty of all organizations of the Moscow Patriarchate and don't trust any others. Last aspect completely applies to the structures of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, whose activity is almost complete suspended in the region.

Noting these dramatic situation concerning a level of religious freedom on the occupied Ukrainian territories, will not be hardly to surprise when to analyze situation in the entire Russia on a subject of religious freedom. Especially after implementation on practice repressive parts of the Russian law on religion. Complete prohibition of activity of Jehovah Witnesses, appearing of several dozens of cases of prosecution of representatives of the different communities, including Muslim, Protestant, and Jewish ones, using religious arguments in the aggressive external politics and strategies, transforming different religious organization, subordinating to their centers, located in Russia, into platforms for attacking and discrediting the real values of the freedom of religion, - it's a fact that needs very concrete reaction from the OSCE, all participating countries, other international organizations: reaction, that presuppose continuation of different forms of sanctions against the country, which is trying to build a parallel reality to the situation, existing in societies oriented on applying true principles of religious freedom.

**I thank you.**