

**WRITTEN CONTRIBUTION BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA**

RC.DEL/92/10

6 October 2010

Wednesday, 6 October

ENGLISH only

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I including
-Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti
-National minorities
-Preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism

In Armenia, there are eleven national minorities: Russians, Assyrians, Yezidis, Kurds, Greeks, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, Polish, Jews, and Georgians. Persons belonging to national minorities in Armenia have the right to freely express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all aspects.

Armenia undertook a number of measures in order to improve the protection of national minorities. Department for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Issues was set up in the government system to initiate and co-ordinate policy-making on issues relevant to national minorities. The establishment of the Coordinating Council for National Minorities was an important step aimed at ensuring the protection of the national minorities in the Republic, activating their inter-community relations, as well as making the state care in relation to specific educational-cultural, legal and other issues more effective. Since 2000, financial assistance in the amount of AMD 10 million is provided from the State Budget to organizations representing the eleven communities, which are members of the Council, for the purpose of supporting educational-cultural activities of the national minorities. It takes various forms, including publication of textbooks, specific educational, cultural, and social programs, publication of newspapers and journals in the languages of national minorities and many others.

“The Union of Nationalities of the Republic of Armenia” non-governmental organisation, headed by the Council of Nationalities, currently comprised of 14 non-governmental organisations, coordinates the activities of non-governmental organisations of the national minorities residing in Armenia, contributes to the protection of civil, economic, social, cultural, and other rights of the national minorities of the Republic of Armenia in cooperation with state, non-governmental, religious and other organisations.

Efforts have been made to raise awareness on minority concerns and mainstream minority issues in national programs, especially in the field of culture. Continuous contribution to the preservation, dissemination and development of the cultural heritage and the culture of the national minorities is one of the priorities of the cultural policy of Armenia also reflected in 2008-2012 Action Plan of the Government.

Currently, the Ministry of Culture is working on the development of a cultural web portal where a separate website is to be assigned to cover the culture of national

minorities residing in Armenia, and the state and regional programs and events implemented, as well as the legal acts and international instruments in the field of culture which are of relevance to them.

The amendments made in 2008 to the Law “On Television and Radio,” stipulated that the Public Television should provide air time for special programs and broadcasts in the languages of the national minorities of Armenia, imposing a quota of up to two hours per week on television, and one hour per day on radio.

A series of TV programs covering fairy-tales and mythology (legends) of ethnic groups living in Armenia and of a number of religious communities were developed through cooperation of the editorial office of children's programs of Shoghakat TV channel and the Department for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Government. Daily programs in 13 languages of national minorities are broadcast on Public Radio. There are also programs on cultural-historical and folkloric themes in national minority languages.

Armenia attaches great importance to the exercise of the national minorities' children's right to education and organization of their education in their native languages. The authorities have taken specific measures with a view to ensure that the ongoing process of “rationalization” of schools does not undermine minority language education. Applicants belonging to national minorities are admitted to higher educational institutions both on equal basis and based on the applications submitted by the heads of the national minorities.

During the last years textbooks for different grades for Yezidi language and literature were elaborated, published and distributed for free to the students of Yezidi Community. In 2007, an Assyrian ABC book was elaborated, which was published and distributed for free to relevant schools. These textbooks were developed with the participation of representatives of national minorities, with a view to providing a balanced response to their specific needs and ensuring their equitable access to the resources available. The government encourages programs directed at training teachers who are members of national minorities.

As regards the involvement of national minorities in the executive bodies and at the local level, this process is implemented within the scope of the legislation of Armenia without any discrimination. As a result, citizens belonging to national minorities and meeting the legal requirements assume positions in different branches of the executive power. In the places of compact residence, they are also involved in bodies of territorial administration and of local self-government.