

Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine

Working session 17: Tolerance and non-discrimination, including address by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; rights of persons belonging to national minorities; preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism

(Warsaw, 01 October 2015)

Distinguished colleagues,

The Government of **Ukraine stays committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of all national minorities in Ukraine**, their unique cultural and language identity and will pursue policies conducive to harmonious development of the Ukrainian multi-ethnic society. The on-going **constitutional reform, including on decentralization**, is expected to contribute to further enhancing the effective participation of all segments of the society regardless of their national identity in the public affairs of the country.

The overwhelming majority of national minorities in Ukraine describe **good inter-ethnic relations and voice strong support for Ukraine's territorial integrity**. This message was clearly voiced by the representatives of different communities during the meetings with the OSCE High Commissioner in Kharkiv, Lviv and Zakarpattia oblasts of Ukraine.

The competent Ukrainian authorities **examine with great attention the HCNM's recommendations**, including on strengthening the institutional framework for national minorities policy, and look forward to continuing close cooperation with the High Commissioner.

Dear participants,

The Government of Ukraine is deeply concerned over the serious human rights violations in the occupied Crimea marked by **increasing repressions, violence and discrimination against the Crimean Tatar indigenous people and ethnic Ukrainians**.

Since the illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia, **the Crimean Tatars have been subjected to constant terror and physical violence**, including cases of killings, abductions and torture of activists, pressure on independent media and religious institutions. The Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Islamic religious schools and mosques have been exposed to surveillance and searches. All Crimean Tatar TV channels were forced to close. Illegal and politically motivated arrests of Crimean Tatar leaders persisted, including the case of Ahtem Ciygoz.

The human rights violations by the occupying authorities also **seek to eradicate all manifestations of the Ukrainian identity, education and culture** on the peninsula. Pro-Ukrainian activists are exposed to harassment, threats, illegal detention and

torture. All Ukrainian television channels have been switched off. There is growing pressure on few remaining Ukrainian schools, where the teaching in Ukrainian language was significantly reduced.

The extremely disturbing human rights landscape presented in numerous independent reports by the OSCE, the UN and the Council of Europe, is also reflected in the findings of the human rights defenders and NGOs. They describe **occupied territory as a “vacuum of law”, “information ghetto” and “military camp” of the Russian Federation**, where it continues to strengthen its repressive policies.

The dire situation in the occupied Crimea results from the **deliberate policy of forced russification**, pursued by the occupying authorities.

We reiterate the need for the HCNM to continue to seek access to the occupied Crimea. It is critical to continue close and permanent monitoring of the situation with the national minorities' rights in Crimea and react to unacceptable cases of serious human rights violations and increasing repressions against the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities. We welcome the joint work in this area undertaken by HCNM and ODIHR.

Distinguished participants,

We are alarmed over the **negative developments with regard to rights and freedoms of persons, belonging to Ukrainian minority in the Russian Federation**, which is one of the largest ethnic communities in Russia.

The ongoing pressure and incitement of hatred through state-owned media pose a serious threat to preserving and developing the national identity, cultural and linguistic needs of the Ukrainian community in Russia.

We encourage the **OSCE HCNM to give immediate attention to these worrying trends** and assist the Russian Federation to fully comply with relevant OSCE commitments on national minorities.

It is crucial that the High Commissioner is able to visit Russia at any time when considered necessary. We encourage the Russian Federation to extend a standing invitation to the HCNM.

Dear colleagues,

The growing aggressive nationalistic sentiment within Russia, paired with xenophobic public statements by mainstream politicians, presents a challenge to Russia in terms of implementation of its OSCE commitments and a serious risk to long-term stability within the OSCE area.

At numerous OSCE meetings we continue to witness how the Russian delegation initiates discussion on this important subject placing emphasis on alleged shortcomings of other States while entirely ignoring a very disturbing tendency inside Russia. Notable, in particular, is the **ever largest ultra nationalist and neo-Nazi forum** held under the name of International Conservative Forum with the approval of

the Russian authorities **in St.Petersburg on 22 March 2015**. The people, who went into the streets to peacefully protest against fascism, including women and pensioners, proved to be the ones who were brutally dispersed or detained by the police. This becomes a reality of today's Russia.

We are deeply alarmed that the violent manifestations of extremism, xenophobia, and ethnic intolerance increasingly target Ukrainian citizens in the Russian Federation. Anti-Ukrainian sentiments and propaganda, actively fuelled by Russian media, are everyday realities in Russia, endangering the safety of Ukrainians.

We strongly condemn the brutal murder of a Ukrainian citizen Roman Muzychenko by a group of 21 young nationalists in Moscow on 14 February 2015.

As all these unacceptable and worrying developments take place against the backdrop of unprecedented rise of radicalism, aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobic manifestations in the Russian Federation, we believe that **they should become a matter of serious concern for the entire OSCE community and Russia itself.**

According to SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, in the first half of 2015 at least 37 people were injured and 4 killed in 10 regions of Russia as a result of racist and neo-Nazi attacks. The Russian NGOs report increasing difficulties in monitoring racist attacks faced with deliberate media blackout on this subject.

The **traditional annual "Russian parades"** are accompanied by displays of swastikas and symbols of SS divisions. The neo-Nazi marches of Cossacks combine orthodox and Nazi symbols.

We remain extremely alarmed that in the environment of growing aggressive nationalism, violent extremism and xenophobia Russia has not only become a breeding ground for intolerance and radicalism, but also **exports aggressive nationalism to other countries.** There is ample evidence that scores of members of **neo-Nazi organizations from the Russian Federation take part in the escalation of violence in the east of Ukraine along with militants of Russian citizenship.**

We deem it of utmost importance that the OSCE Institutions find the tools to address to the above alarming trends within their respective mandates.

We call upon Russia to address the root causes of the rise of violent radicalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in the Russian Federation and to use the valuable expertise of the OSCE Institutions to assist in this process.

Thank you for your attention.