

**OSCE HDIM 2016****Estonia****Right of Reply****Working Session 10 Tolerance and non-discrimination I****26 September 2016**

Thank you, Mister Moderator.

I would like to use this opportunity to respond to the statements of Russian Federation, Russian School in Estonia and LICHR.

The Estonian Government considers process of integration of the society and promotion of Estonian citizenship as one of its priorities. Estonia has for years paid much attention to the issues of undetermined citizenship. Accordingly, the Estonian Government has facilitated the naturalization process for all legal residents who wish to acquire Estonian citizenship. Our Russian-speaking population are our people. They consider Estonia their home and want to live, work and raise their children here.

It was alleged that non-citizens are not enjoying the same political, social and cultural rights as citizens, which is not correct with one small exception – they cannot participate in parliamentary elections. At the same time all legal residence, regardless of their citizenship, have the right to vote in local elections.

As concerns access to Russian-language media channels we would like to stress that on 28 September 2015 a Russian-language Public Broadcasting TV channel ETV+ was launched in Estonia. The channel is independent and directed mainly to the Russian-speaking audience. The aim of the TV channel is to provide balanced program of high quality reflecting everyday life and culture in Estonia to all groups within the society.

Russian school in Estonia has complained against the decision of the Government not to grant an exemption to 2 Russian language schools in Tallinn to continue instruction only in Russian language. We would like to clarify that these cases are pending before the court. Supreme court will make the final decision to be followed by the authorities. The Government has not

granted exemption to Russian language schools in order to give all students in Estonia, and not depending on their mother tongue, to have equal opportunities to continue their studies or enter the labor market.

Thank you.