



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

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## **Statement in response to the Report of H.E. Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1188<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
7 June 2018

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The delegation of Ukraine joins others in welcoming OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for the presented report.

The Government of Ukraine values the close cooperation with the High Commissioner and his engagement in assisting Ukraine, including during his two visits to my country over the reported period.

Ukraine is a country where different national minorities lived in peace and harmony side by side over decades and centuries. Such assessment on lack of inter-ethnic strife is also reflected in the OSCE SMM's reports. Ukraine stays committed to further protecting and promoting the rights of all national minorities in Ukraine in line with the OSCE commitments and international standards.

At the same time, numerous significant challenges faced by Ukraine and its people of all ethnic backgrounds continue to stem from the hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation and Russia's illegal occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory. We have documented attempts of destabilisation in Ukraine on inter-ethnic grounds with traces leading to the Russian Federation. In this connection we are pleased to point out to the wisdom of the people, who do not fall for these provocations, and the professionalism of the law-enforcement in undertaking prompt investigations and establishing the perpetrators. Against this backdrop we find highly relevant the HCNM's point about state and non-state actors alike attempting "to use language and education issues to fan the flames of conflict". It is highly important to timely detect such attempts and prevent them from unfolding into serious security risks.

Particular challenges, grave human rights violations and discrimination are faced by the Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, illegally occupied by the Russian Federation. As acknowledged by international human rights observations, the occupying authorities have denied various manifestations of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar culture and

identity by groups perceived as hostile to the Russian Federation and the attempted annexation of Crimea.

The Mejlis and Kurultai of Crimean Tatar people remain outlawed in violation of the Order on provisional measures, issued by the International Court of Justice on 19 April 2017. Let us recall that the Russian Federation was ordered to “refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis“.

The Russian Federation was also ordered to “ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language” in the Crimean peninsula, however there is further deterioration of the situation. In the four years of Russia’s illegal occupation the number of students undergoing instruction in Ukrainian language has dropped by 35 times from 2013, the number of Ukrainian schools decreased by 7 times, and the number of Ukrainian classes - by 31 times. Ukrainian as a language of instruction has been fully removed from university-level education.

In your today’s presentation, dear High Commissioner, you mentioned state symbols. Among many facts of Russia’s appalling repressions, I draw attention to imprisonment of Ukrainian farmer Volodymyr Balukh by Russian occupation authorities for hoisting a Ukrainian flag on his private house. He is now on a hunger strike protesting against the cruelty of the Russian occupation.

The gravity of the situation requires adequate reaction and continuous active engagement of the OSCE High Commissioner. The people of all ethnic backgrounds that have to live under Russia’s occupation must be able to enjoy their inherent human rights and freedoms. We encourage the HCNM and the ODIHR to use all assets at their disposal and closely monitor the situation, in particular the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2015 HRAM Report on Crimea. We also encourage to seek increased effectiveness of interaction with the United Nations to contribute to implementation of UNGA Resolutions 71/205 and 72/190, both titled “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)”. It remains crucial to continue seeking access to the peninsula in compliance with Ukraine’s legislation and the UNGA Resolution 68/262 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine”.

We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea which is an integral part of Ukraine.

**Dear High Commissioner,**

The delegation of Ukraine reiterates its alarm over a negative trend in conditions for the national minorities in the Russian Federation and the lack of updates in the HCNM’s reports on respective contacts with the Russian authorities and visits to this country. With over 2 mln strong Ukrainian national minority in Russia, according to official statistics, there is not a single school there with the full curriculum of instruction in the Ukrainian language. Since the start of Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine, we register the increased frequency of claims on a high level in Russia that “Russians and Ukrainians are one people”. These claims are false, but they entail deliberate practices of suppressing Ukrainian culture and identity, discrimination against Ukrainian NGOs and activists. Last year a single Library of

Ukrainian Literature in Russia, which had functioned in Moscow, was liquidated. Over 60 Ukrainian citizens were made political prisoners of the Russian regime on fabricated charges which delivered a chilling effect to the Ukrainian ethnic minority in Russia and its cultural manifestations.

As the High Commissioner is probably aware, the Russian regime also resorted last year to restricting the national languages of the constituent republics. The restrictions are planned to go that far that the parliamentarians of the Republic of Tatarstan compared amendments to the Russian Federal Law “On Education” with Stalin’s repressions.

We believe that all these worrying developments require reaction and close engagement of the HCNM. We encourage and look forward to specific practical steps.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

Over the years since establishment of the office, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities developed valuable sets of recommendations comprehensively addressing respective issues, among them the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies and the Bolzano-Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations.

We welcome the intention of the High Commissioner to actively raise awareness of the HCNM’s recommendations. In this regard, we welcome the successful conduct of the high-level conference on language policy and conflict prevention in Oslo last week and look forward to the upcoming event on national minorities in inter-state relations in Udine. We do share the HCNM’s view that the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendation “are more relevant than ever before”.

From its part, Ukraine is ready to work for the endorsement of the HCNM Recommendations within the OSCE to ensure common framework for protection and promotion of rights of persons, belonging to national minorities, across the OSCE space.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

I will conclude by again thanking the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Lamberto Zannier for today’s report, reiterating Ukraine’s readiness for further cooperation and wishing the High Commissioner every success in his important activities.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**