



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement in response to H.E. Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1246th meeting of the Permanent Council,
7 November 2019

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.

We appreciate the close cooperation with the High Commissioner and his engagement in assisting Ukraine. A substantive meetings of the High Commissioner L.Zannier and new Ukrainian authorities took place on 10-11 October 2019 during his visit to Kyiv.

In connection with the Ukrainian legislation on ensuring the functioning of Ukrainian as the State language, we note evaluation by the HCNM of steps taken by Ukraine with a view to strengthen “the role of the State language to facilitate integration and to enhance a shared sense of belonging” of diverse societies in Ukraine. We appreciate assessments of the implementation of the Venice Commission recommendations, namely, when it comes on extension of the transition period for the implementation of Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On education” until 2023 as well as on legislative efforts to ensure the right for the private education institutions to freely choose the language of their curriculum.

The authorities of Ukraine will further continue its activities aimed at the implementation of the Venice Commission recommendations of December 2017 and relevant advises form the HCNM.

Ukraine is determined to provide for full enjoyment of rights and realization of potential of all citizens of Ukraine regardless of their ethnic origin, which is also guaranteed by the law.

Dear High Commissioner,

My delegation constantly voices its concerns in this hall over the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which take place in parts of Ukraine illegally occupied by the Russian Federation. Your regularly visits to Ukraine and meetings with the representatives of Crimean Tatars provided you with the first-hand information about human rights violations and discrimination faced by the Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians on the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia.

As widely acknowledged by international human rights observers, the Russian occupying authorities have denied various manifestations of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar culture and identity, perceived as hostile to the Russian Federation and its attempted annexation of Ukrainian Crimea.

Most recently the UN Secretary-General in his report on the situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, focused on “a narrowing

space for manifestations of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar identities and enjoyment of the respective cultures in Crimea.”

The restrictions have reportedly been closely connected to the suppression of political dissent and alternative political opinion in occupied Crimea. Based on the OHCHR findings, the UN Secretary General noted that reprisals in occupied Crimea comprise “pressure on members of Ukrainian cultural organizations and a complete ban on the Mejlis”, which has been widely perceived as an important self-governing institution of the Crimean Tatar people.

In this regard we urge the Russian Federation to stop ignoring the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice aiming at ceasing violation of the Convention on the Eradication of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. After two and a half years of Russia’s non-compliance with these provisional measures on Crimean Tatar representative institutions and education in the Ukrainian language, the situation has only deteriorated.

The UNESCO Director-General in his regular report on the situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea, delivered during the 207th session of the UNESCO Executive Board this October, referred to the Russian statistics which speak for themselves.

According to Russian Federation statistics, in the 2018/2019 academic year, one Ukrainian school and eight Ukrainian classes in five Russian schools in Crimea continued to deliver curriculum in Ukrainian, attended by 249 children (0.2 % of all Crimean students enrolled in schools), which demonstrates that the number of children educated in Ukrainian has dropped dramatically since the beginning of the occupation (the number of secondary schools with Ukrainian language of education in the peninsula has decreased by 87.5%; the number of classes with Ukrainian language of curriculum in secondary educational institutions in Crimea has decreased by over 98%; the number of pupils studying in the Ukrainian language in general educational establishments of the Crimea has also decreased by over 98%).

Dear High Commissioner,

In your today’s report you noted that the subject of “naturalization and extra-territorial conferral of citizenship” was raised by you before Russian authorities during your last visit to Moscow.

In this respect as well as following the Kremlin’s decision on expedited issuance of Russia’s passports to the Ukrainian citizens residing in Dnipro and Luhansk regions we deem necessary to reiterate our well known position: the illegal passportization is a new dimension of creeping annexation by Russia of Ukraine’s territory. It is yet another blatant violation of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of Ukraine, a gross interference into internal affairs of my country. It is yet another blatant breach by Russia of founding OSCE principles. Thus, we would continuously encourage the HCNM to be more vocal when such gross violations take place.

Dear colleagues,

Reporting by the HCNM on his last visit to Russia makes us bring to the attention of the PC the decision by Russia’s authorities declaring the Ukrainian World Congress a threat to Russia’s national security. UWC is a recognized non-government organization within the United Nations and the Council of Europe, which brings together as one powerful voice the 20 million Ukrainian diaspora in over 60 countries, the largest of which lives in the Russian Federation. Prohibiting the people of Russia from cooperating with the UWC is yet another attempt to intimidate, oppress and further assimilate Ukrainians residing in Russia.

As this ban was imposed on the eve of the HCNM visit to Russia in July this year, we would enquire whether High Commissioner addressed the issue of protecting of rights of Ukrainians minority residing in Russia as well as his assessments of approaches applied by the Russia’s authorities to the Ukrainian community residing in Russia.

It needs to be reminded that with over 2 mln strong Ukrainian national minority in Russia there is not a single school there with the full curriculum of instruction in the Ukrainian language. In 2017 a single Library of Ukrainian Literature in Russia, which had functioned in Moscow, was liquidated. Over 80 Ukrainian citizens have been made political prisoners of the Russian regime

on fabricated charges. Obviously all this delivers a chilling effect to the Ukrainian ethnic minority in Russia and its cultural manifestations.

The High Commissioner informed us that main concerns expressed to him by minority's interlocutors in Russia were related to the education reform regulating the use of languages in schools. In practice, amendments to the federal law "On Education in the Russian Federation", enacted in August 2018, established disincentives to study minority languages, even in regions where the titular language is supposed to be used on a par with the Russian. This reform caused considerable resentment in many ethnic regions of the country drawing allusions to Stalin's repressions against national minorities. Most recently on 10 September this resentment turned into fatal incident with Albert Razin, a doctor in philosophy and an Udmurt national activist, who set himself on fire in front of local parliament in Izhevsk, the capital of western Russia's Udmurt Republic, protesting against Russia's language policies.

My delegation draws the attention of the PC and HCNM to this tragedy namely in view to highlight the fact that over the recent years we have witnessed the vigorous advocating by Russia for the rights of the national minorities, first of all Russian minorities as well as so called "protection" of the Russian language abroad, especially in Ukraine and Baltic states, while at home the Russian government seems to apply different rules towards minorities.

Instead, we urge Russia to address the deep-rooted problems facing ethnic and linguistic minorities in Russia. It should reassess its language policies, with a view to eliminating direct or indirect discrimination and reverse policies that are sweeping away linguistic diversity.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me conclude by again thanking the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Lamberto Zannier for today's report and expressing our hope for further meaningful cooperation.

Thank you!