

**Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic
for National Minorities**

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**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting,
Working session 17: Rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

1st October 2015, Warsaw

Dear Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to warmly greet you all. Within this panel devoted to national minorities I would like to provide you with information about the activities of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for National Minorities in maintaining and promoting the development of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in the Slovak Republic.

One of the main priorities of the Government of the Slovak Republic is the attentive approach towards human rights, including the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities. The Government therefore supports the activities pursued by national minorities living in the territory of the Slovak Republic which contribute substantially to the shaping and evolution of cultural diversity as a traditional and integral part of the development of Slovak society. In this context, the Government established the **Office of the Plenipotentiary for National Minorities** with relevant coordination and decision-making powers.

Office of the Plenipotentiary consistently implements all relevant tasks in this area primarily through the proper functioning of the Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, as well as the effective use of Culture of National Minorities grant programme promoting cultural, educational, research and training activities of persons belonging to national minorities.

One of the main principles of the Office of the Plenipotentiary in fulfilling these tasks is strengthening the **participatory dialogue** with all representatives of national minorities to get ideas for further development of mutual cooperation in providing solutions of specific problems of individual national minorities. In this regard, the Office of the Plenipotentiary systematically organizes meetings with the national minorities' representatives.

As regards the participation of representatives of national minorities living in the Slovak Republic in public life and decision-making process we consider the creation of the **Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups** representing the

advisory body of the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality for extremely important. I would like to emphasize that the committee is based on the principle - that on issues relating to certain minority group only the representatives of the national minority which the inquiry relates to are entitled to vote. Solely the representatives of national minorities and the Chair have the right to vote in the committee.

Office of the Plenipotentiary in cooperation with the representatives of national minorities and the Committee intensively worked on the preparation of the Report on Situation in Use on Languages of National Minorities in the Slovak Republic for the period of 2013 and 2014 in accordance with the Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the use of national minority languages, as amended as well as on the preparation of annual evaluation reports on the promotion of the culture of national minorities, on the state of minority education and on the use of minority languages. The Office of Plenipotentiary in cooperation with the Committee have worked together on the **National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic as Regards the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups**. The Starting Material of the Strategy as Regards the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups prepared in a participatory manner by the Working Group established by the Committee was annex to this proposal. In accordance with the approved resolution, in May 2015 was established the temporary working group responsible for preparing **Action Plan for the Protection of Persons Belonging to National Minorities and Ethnic Groups**.

In 2015 the Committee approved the proposal of the representative of the Serbian minority and of the representative of the Russian minority **to include Serbian and Russian among the languages of national minorities used in the Slovak Republic** in European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This action is the subject of the preparation of the national process in this period.

One of the most important instruments of direct support of culture and language of national minorities, as well as education and training on the rights of national minorities is the **Culture of National Minorities grant programme**, which contributes to:

- preservation, expression, protection and development of the identity and cultural values of national minorities;

- upbringing and education towards the rights of national minorities;
- interethnic and intercultural dialogue and the spirit of understanding between the persons belonging to the majority society and the members of national minorities and ethnic groups.

Thank you for your attention.