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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
IN EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT OF REPLY, AT THE 1256th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 January 2020

**On linguistic and educational discrimination in Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite the assurances from the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine about the Ukrainian Government's good intentions, the Law on Full General Secondary Education approved by the Verkhovna Rada violates a number of both domestic and international legal obligations of Ukraine. I am compelled to focus on them in more detail.

First, the law contravenes the country's Constitution, in particular Article 10, which provides for free development, use and protection of Russian and other languages of national minorities. Article 11 stipulates that the State shall promote the development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of indigenous peoples and national minorities in Ukraine. The new law also violates Article 22, which states that the content and scope of existing rights and freedoms shall not be diminished in the adoption of new laws or in the amendment of laws that are in force. It contravenes Article 24, in accordance with which citizens have equal constitutional rights and freedoms and are equal before the law, notably with respect to linguistic characteristics. It is also incompatible with Article 53, which states that citizens belonging to national minorities are guaranteed by law the right to education in their native language.

This normative act is also at odds with the Ukrainian Law on National Minorities, Article 6 of which allows the possibility to study in one's native language at State educational institutions. Preferences in favour of certain languages conflict with Article 1, paragraph 1, of this law, which states that citizens shall enjoy the protection of the State on an equal basis.

The Ukrainian Government is also disregarding its international obligations. The new law violates Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been ratified by Ukraine. I quote: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

The norms of the Council of Europe are once again being trampled upon. Ukraine has ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in accordance with which the Ukrainian Government

is obliged to protect and ensure the functioning of regional and minority languages in education, including secondary education (Article 8), science, culture, politics, as well as in the work of the administrative authorities and courts (Articles 7–10). In its accompanying declaration to the Charter, Ukraine specifically agreed to also apply its provisions to the Russian language.

The Ukrainian Government is increasingly distancing itself from the good-faith implementation of its OSCE commitments. The new law, like the framework Law on Education and the State Language Law, violates the provisions of the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document. Paragraph 34 of the Document provides that: “The participating States will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities, notwithstanding the need to learn the official language or languages of the State concerned, have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue.” Paragraph 35 of the Document states that: “The participating States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities.”

It is clear that in these circumstances, there can be no talk of any kind of “opportunities” for national minorities in Ukraine, let alone “respect” for their rights.

Thank you for your attention.