



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

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ENGLISH only

**Statement**  
**in Response to the Statement of the Russian Federation on Linguistic Rights of**  
**National Minorities in Ukraine**

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine  
to the 1137<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
16 March 2017

**Mr. Chairman,**

In connection with the statement of the Delegation of the Russian Federation which raised the issue of linguistic rights of the national minorities in Ukraine, the Delegation of Ukraine would like to make the following comments in response.

At the outset, we need to underscore that the puzzle may come together for the Russian delegation if it stops denying the irrefutable facts of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. As witnessed over the past three years, Russia uses its unfounded claims of violations of rights of the Russian minority as a tool of its hybrid warfare and a distraction from its military intervention in Ukraine.

Presently due to the aggression of the Russian Federation we need to distinguish between two parts of Ukraine: one - under the control of the Government of Ukraine where all Ukrainian citizens can freely realize their rights, including linguistic, and where the authorities consistently aim to foster respect for human rights in close co-operation with respective international organizations, and another – illegally occupied by the Russian Federation (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol) and the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts controlled by the Russian hybrid forces that are transformed by the occupation authorities in the “exclusion zones for human rights”.

**Distinguished colleagues,**

The establishment of an effective system of promotion and protection of rights of all national minorities and indigenous peoples, as well as support and development of tolerant inter-ethnic relations in Ukrainian society is among priorities of the National Human Rights Strategy of Ukraine and the respective Action Plan. They also aim at establishing an efficient mechanism for participation of representatives of national minorities in decision-making of state authorities and local self-government bodies.

The linguistic rights of the national minorities of Ukraine are guaranteed in the different spheres by the country's legislation.

The Constitution of Ukraine establishes the Ukrainian language as the state language of the country. At the same time, Article 10 of the Constitution guarantees the free development and usage of Russian and other languages of the national minorities of Ukraine in Ukraine.

According to Article 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine, citizens who belong to national minorities are guaranteed in accordance with the law the right to receive instruction in their native language, or to study their native language in state and communal educational institutions and through national cultural societies.

The Law "On the principles of the state language policy" further determined the linguistic rights at the community and local authorities level.

The Law "On the freedom of conscience and religious organizations" guarantees the linguistic rights in religious education, religious literature and ceremonies.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

At the same time, as repeatedly underscored in this hall, numerous dire challenges of Ukraine and its people stem from Russia's aggression, its breach of international law and failure to honour its international commitments and obligations, including in the area of respect for human rights.

We continue to be profoundly concerned over the mounting repressions, serious human rights violations and discrimination perpetrated by Russia's occupation authorities against the Crimean Tatar national minority and ethnic Ukrainians in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol under the Russian illegal occupation.

The violations have been registered and documented by the United Nations and the OSCE ODIHR/HCNM missions, civil society organizations and human rights defenders. Half a million of ethnic Ukrainians and 250 thousand of ethnic Crimean Tatars have been effectively deprived of their right to maintain and develop their culture and national identity in Crimea. Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar TV channels and newspapers were closed. There is only one 13-minute television program in Ukrainian shown twice a week on the Crimean TV run by occupation authorities.

Throughout the period of illegal occupation of Crimea, the Russian occupation authorities have drastically limited curricula relating to teaching in the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages at all levels.

As part of russification policies, the education system in Crimea has been entirely changed over to the Russian language. Most of the schools and classes with instruction in the Ukrainian language were requalified into instruction in Russian. Presently only 0.5% of children have the possibility to learn Ukrainian. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation has undertaken a massive compulsory "re-education of teachers of Ukrainian language and literature" for teaching in Russian. These subjects are made optional. All post-graduate programmes in Ukrainian philology, as well as almost all chairs in higher educational institutions have been closed.

Only one school with instruction completely in the Ukrainian language remains operational out of seven that existed before occupation. The number of Ukrainian classes in schools has been reduced to one-sixth comparing to the their number before the occupation. The school curricula are deliberately drafted to force the Crimean schoolchildren miss Ukrainian classes because they would overlap with the classes in mandatory subjects.

There is a serious problem around studies of subjects in the Crimean Tatar language. Presently, only 2.76% of schoolchildren in Crimea are learning the Crimean Tatar language. The units in scientific and educational institutions, especially higher institutions which were focused on the study of Crimean Tatar culture, have been shut. As a result, teachers and researchers with long careers of study of this subject lost their jobs.

Another area of major concern are the occupied territories of Donbas where the criminal activities of Russia-backed illegal armed formations led to internal displacement of over 1,7 million people and eradication of human rights and freedoms, including of national minorities, for the people who remained there.

The teachers and professors are forced to adapt the educational curriculums to the ones of the Russian Federation. There are now less than 2% of schoolchildren who study in the classes with the Ukrainian as the language of instruction, although in 2013/2014 school year there were 50,4% of them.

All the mass media in Ukrainian and other, except Russian, languages have been forcefully closed.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Russian Federation bears direct responsibility for gross violation of linguistic and other rights of national minorities in the parts of Ukraine illegally occupied by Russia. These people feel defenceless because the Russian occupation authorities deny access of respective international organisations for permanent human rights monitoring. We call on the OSCE Chairmanship and the autonomous Institutions to be fully seized of this unacceptable situation and use all instruments at their disposal for effective monitoring and reaction to ongoing violation of human rights by Russia.

We urge Russia to fully implement the provisions of the UN General Assembly Resolution 71/205 “Situation of human rights in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)” of 19 December 2016 and the recommendations of the reports of the OSCE ODIHR/HCNM and the UN Human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**