



PC.DEL/477/17

7 April 2017

ENGLISH only

Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Statement on “The closure of the Library of the Ukrainian literature
in the Russian Federation”**

As for delivery by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1141st meeting of the Permanent Council,
6 April 2017

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of Ukraine repeatedly brought to the attention of the Permanent Council its deep concerns over the serious negative trends in the area of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Russian Federation, including with regard to the rights of persons, belonging to nearly 5-million Ukrainian national minority, which is one of the largest ethnic communities in this country.

In the beginning of March the authorities of the city of Moscow formally reorganized but de-facto closed the single Library of the Ukrainian literature in Russia – a unique institution of this kind in the country. The Library, which started its work almost 100 years ago and was the only state-run center of Ukrainian literature, culture and language, now fell victim to the present Russia’s policies aiming to suppress and eradicate manifestations of the Ukrainian national identity.

52,000 books and periodicals of the Ukrainian literature Library are transferred to Russia's Main foreign languages Library, in particular its newly established so-called Center of Slavic Literatures. The tragedy for the collection of the Ukrainian library is that this center is reportedly able to accommodate only 12 000 books in total.

The staff of the Ukrainian Library will not be able to continue working, its free Ukrainian language courses and scientific activities will cease.

On paper, the Article 26 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation provides that “everyone shall have the right to use his or her native language, to a free choice of the language of communication, upbringing, education and creative work”, but the reality is in stark contrast to the Constitutional guarantees for the Russian citizens of Ukrainian origin.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Library was placed under pressure for a long time, but this pressure increased dramatically alongside Russia's aggression against Ukraine. As we informed the Permanent Council, in October 2015 the Library was raided by the Russian law-enforcement under the false pretext of searching for "extremist" literature. The Director of the Library Natalia Sharina was detained by the police, interrogated and placed under house arrest since the end of October 2015.

In April 2016 the investigators requested personal data of the readers of the library who read some books about Holodomor or History of Ukraine six and even eighteen years ago.

As the allegations of the Russian Investigative Committee about Mrs Sharina's involvement in extremism collapsed, she was accused of "inciting hatred and enmity through misuse of office" and of misappropriation of library finances, whereby she could face up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The Amnesty International concluded in its 2016/2017 report that Natalya Sharina was a prisoner of conscience and initiated an international campaign to make Russian authorities release her without any conditions. Her lawyers prepare for submitting the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

We call on the Russian Federation to reverse the process that leads to the liquidation of the Library of Ukrainian literature in Moscow and take steps to enable resumption of its full-fledged activities in the current premises at Trifonovskaya street 61, building 1.

We urge the Russian authorities to put an end to persecution of the Ukrainians and their institutions, including state-owned, which carry out the activities of preserving and promoting Ukrainian culture in the territory of the Russian Federation. We urge the Russian authorities to publicly react to and condemn the wide-spread manifestations in the country of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia that target the Ukrainians and their national identity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.