



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement
in response to Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1401st meeting of the Permanent Council,
08 December 2022

Mr Chairperson,

While aligning with the statement delivered by the EU delegation, I wish to make a statement in my national capacity.

Dear High Commissioner,

We thank you for the Report that raises many important issues related to national minorities in the OSCE region.

We take note of your reaction to Russia's attempts to illegally annex even more sovereign territories of Ukraine following sham referendums it orchestrated in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions of Ukraine. They do not reflect the will of the people of Ukraine and constitute yet another flagrant violation of international law by the aggressor state and its international obligations. We believe such illegal actions deserve your strong condemnation.

It is not at all surprising the interlocutors, including national minorities, living in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine that approached your Office, have pointed to a number of measures and practices that are having a negative impact on their lives and physical safety. Mass killings of civilians, evidence of torture and abuse, unlawful detention, abductions, forced deportation, illegal adoption, conscription and illegal mobilization, forced de-Ukrainization. And this is not an exhaustive list of human rights violations people are facing in the territories temporarily occupied by Russia. These are war crimes Russia must be held accountable for.

Ambassador Abdrakhmanov,

The relocation of residents from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia, including transfer of the Ukrainian children and their subsequent adoption by Russian citizens, grossly violates international law.

In addition to these crimes, in the temporarily occupied territories Russia continues its attempts to destroy Ukrainian identity by persecuting the Ukrainian language and culture.

In terms of education, in continuation of their de-Ukrainization policy invaders make every effort to destroy European standards-based national education system, impose Russian curriculum, intimidate and abduct teachers, who refuse to collaborate.

The aim is clear. Russia wants to exterminate Ukraine as a nation, bearing in mind that children are the future of every nation.

Can you imagine the scale of tragedy – the whole generation of schoolboys and schoolgirls, who were born when Russian invasion began in 2014 are used to live under non-stop Russian propaganda in schools, on TV and in every sphere of life where Russia's tentacles could

reach out. The occupiers tried to repeat the same scenario on the whole territory of Ukraine after a new phase of aggression that began on 24 February 2022. We are horrified with the situation in Mariupol that was completely destroyed by Russia and where many children remain in horrible living conditions and with Russian propaganda as the only source of receiving information.

We are convinced that all our children in all war-affected Ukrainian cities will soon get back to normal life, when those cities are liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as it was in Kharkiv region and Kherson.

In light of the abovementioned, we urge you, Ambassador, to address in line with your mandate Russia's actions aimed at imposing forced de-Ukrainization, which constitute grave violation of the OSCE commitments and norms of international law.

Ambassador Abdrakhmanov,

We echo your concern expressed in the Report about violations of human rights of Crimean Tatars, in particular their disproportionate conscription. Under the guise of a conscription, mobilization campaign is also underway in Crimea, the nature and methods of which testify to the desire of the Russian leadership to reduce the number of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars on the peninsula, forcing them to fight against their own country.

Moreover, Crimean Tatars are being targeted not only by the conscription. For opposing the occupation, they continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrests, sham trials, illegal searches of their homes, abductions, intimidation and other ill-treatments that amount to torture, like punitive psychiatry.

The recent shameful sentences, which we strongly condemn, handed down by the occupation authorities in Crimea to Crimean Tatar citizen journalists Osman Arifmemetov, Ruslan Suleymanov and Rustem Sheikhaliyev, as well as activists Yashar Muedinov and Enver Ametov, is yet another proof of the biased discriminatory attitude towards the indigenous population of the peninsula.

We understand, Ambassador Abdrakhmanov, that you do not deal with individual cases, but these sentences are nothing more, but a punitive raid to suppress any attempt to oppose occupation and retaliation for spreading the truth about mass violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the temporarily occupied Crimea.

We count on your involvement with the full use of instruments, available under your mandate, in facilitating the immediate release of Crimean Tatar citizen journalists held in Russian captivity, including Vladyslav Yesypenko and Nariman Dzhelyal.

Dear High Commissioner,

In your latest Report you once again pointed out that "it is equally important to maintain the space for Russian-speaking individuals and communities across the OSCE area".

We stressed on numerous occasions, including in this very hall, that the issue of the Russian language is gravely misused and completely politicized by Russia itself. Such narratives are stemming from Russia's imperialistic past that it tries to revive at any cost, even by sacrificing its own population in brutal attacks on other sovereign states.

We would strongly encourage you to look at this artificial problem from the different angle. People in Mariupol, Kharkiv, Kherson as no one else know what the aftermaths of the Russian "protection" mean.

The so-called "language issue" was used as one of the pretexts for Russia's launching and justifying its armed aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and Russia continues misusing the notion after it started a full-scale war on 24 February 2022.

For years Russian propaganda has been distorting facts and trying to form a new perception of reality and history. Accordingly, constant allegations articulated by Russia about violation of rights of the Russian-speaking population in a number of participating States are nothing more

than a manipulation and searching another loophole for interfering with internal affairs of states under the pretext of “protecting russian-speaking population”.

The russian war clearly demonstrates that the issue of national minorities has been gravely instrumentalized in pursuing by one state of its imperialistic geopolitical ambitions. It is of utmost importance that your Institution plays its particular role in addressing violations of national minorities' rights, including those resulting from russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal occupation by russia of parts of Ukraine's sovereign territory, in order to prevent the repetition of such horrible events in future.

In conclusion, let me once again thank you and your team for all the important work done. You can always count on our support and cooperation.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.