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Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 12 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a decision and a statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation regarding the violation of fundamental human rights in Ukraine following new bans on the use of the Russian language (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72.

(Signed) V. Nebenzia



Annex I to the letter dated 12 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Decision of the State Duma concerning the statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation regarding the violation of fundamental human rights in Ukraine following new bans on the use of the Russian language

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation hereby decides:

1. To adopt the statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation regarding the violation of fundamental human rights in Ukraine following new bans on the use of the Russian language.
2. To transmit the present decision and the aforementioned statement to the President of the Russian Federation, V.V. Putin, the Government of the Russian Federation, the United Nations, the Interparliamentary Assembly of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Congress of the United States of America and the parliaments of the States members of the European Union.
3. To transmit the present decision and the aforementioned statement to the Parliamentary Gazette for official publication.
4. The present decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

V. V. Volodin

Chair of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the
Russian Federation

Annex II to the letter dated 12 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the State Duma regarding the violation of fundamental human rights in Ukraine following new bans on the use of the Russian language

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, maintaining its respect for fundamental human rights and reaffirming its commitment to international law, expresses its deep concern about the renewed efforts to target the Russian language in Ukraine following the entry into force of a series of bans on its use under the Act of Ukraine on supporting the functioning of Ukrainian as the national language.

Adopted in 2019, in the final days of the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, this Act is rightly seen in Ukraine and abroad as an odious attempt to consolidate the policy of forced Ukrainianization and assimilation, primarily of the Russian and Russian-speaking population of that multi-ethnic country. Despite their electoral campaign promises and the international obligations of Ukraine, including those under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Minsk Agreements to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the new Ukrainian authorities have phased in the implementation of the Act. Since 16 January 2020, advertisements in the Russian language have been banned. On 16 July 2020, a ban was introduced on the use of the Russian language for all scientific publications, dissertation defences and technical, project and medical documents and for all diagnoses, prescriptions and purposes. Since the beginning of the school year on 1 September 2020, all Russian-language schools have switched to teaching in Ukrainian. Lastly, since 16 January 2021, all companies, regardless of their ownership, have been banned from serving customers in Russian. Compliance with these requirements is monitored by a dedicated service of the Ukrainian Commissioner for the Protection of the State Language, which threatens people with fines and penalties. A climate of xenophobia and denunciation is taking hold in Ukraine, the victims of which are ordinary citizens belonging to various national groups.

The deputies of the State Duma note that the legislative and law enforcement practices of the Ukrainian authorities contradict the Constitution of Ukraine, which guarantees “the free development, use and protection of the Russian language” (art. 10, para. 3) and “the right to education in one’s native language” (art. 53, para. 4); provides for the “promotion of the study of languages of inter-ethnic communication” (art. 10, para. 4) and the “promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all indigenous peoples and national minorities” (art. 11); and expressly prohibits “privileges or restrictions on the basis of language” (art. 24, para. 2).

In Russia, Ukrainian – the language of many of our citizens, neighbours and closest relatives – is respected and loved. In Ukraine, however, respect for the Ukrainian language will not be achieved through bans on Russian and other languages. Millions of Russians and Russian speakers are living in Ukraine, where nationalists and Russophobes are depriving them of their right to educate and raise their children and to communicate and defend their interests in their native language. The deputies of the State Duma are wondering: what is the current national and linguistic policy of Ukraine if not a gross violation of all civilized norms and human rights? How can we develop relations with Ukraine and take into consideration its interests under these circumstances?

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation considers the bans on, and the targeting of, Russian and other languages in Ukraine, pursued under the pretext of protecting Ukrainian as the national language, to be unacceptable.

The deputies of the State Duma call upon the Ukrainian authorities to stop this harmful practice and expect the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and national parliaments around the world to condemn it.

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation maintains that respect for the rights and freedoms of Russians and Russian speakers and for our compatriots in Ukraine is a key determinant of the foreign policy of the Government of the Russian Federation.

V. V. Volodin

Chair of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the
Russian Federation
