



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, 4 October 2011

Statement of the Georgian Delegation
Working Session 12: National Minorities

Your Excellency,

We are happy to greet you at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. First of all, let me express my appreciation for your commitment to the protection of victims of ethnic cleansing and discrimination and your perseverance in fighting against violations of human rights of ethnic Georgians in the occupied regions of Georgia. Ambassador, your strong engagement in monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in the occupied territories of Georgia is extremely valuable, especially in the context of a full isolation of these regions from effective control of the central Government, lack of international presence and absence of effective mechanisms for ensuring security and order in the above areas.

We are grateful for your continuous work in assisting the Government of Georgia in its policy aimed at strengthening integration and increase the cohesiveness of Georgian society. In this regard, let me bring to your attention numerous state programs that have been implemented during the last years, with the objective, from one side, to enhance opportunities to learn the Georgian language at all levels of education and promote enrolment of minority students in institutions of higher education, and from another, to strengthen knowledge of native language among minorities

The National Concept on Civil Integration and accompanying Action Plan, approved by the Government in 2009, continues to play a key role in the field of protection of rights of national minorities. The document is based on the principles of equality of every citizen, strengthening of the tradition of tolerance and effective participation of minorities in the decision-making process. The Action Plan 2009-2014 specifies activities and programs, which are to be implemented over the five years in fields of the rule of law, education and the state language, media and access to information, political integration and civil participation, social and regional integration, culture and the preservation of identity.

The Ministry of Education and Science has been carrying out systematic and cohesive policy of state language teaching for minorities in order to remedy lack of sufficient knowledge of the State language by minority groups. During last years,

numerous state programs have been implemented in order to enhance opportunities to learn the Georgian language at all levels of education.

In addition, with the support of HCNM, a policy paper and Action Plan for 2009-2014 on “National Minorities’ Integration through Multilingual Education” has been elaborated. The Government of Georgia has piloted multilingual education program in 40 non-Georgian public schools. In the nearest future, the multilingual education will be provided for school students of non-Georgian schools throughout Georgia.

Since 2007, adult education centers “Language Houses” are functioning in different regions of Georgia; The centers serve teachers, public servants, social workers, business representatives and representatives of other social groups. In addition, in 2009 within the “Georgian Language Program,” Georgian Language Centers were established in Kvemo Kartli region. Soon eight new Georgian Language Houses will be established throughout different regions of Georgia.

In addition, the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration delivers a special state language programme for minorities who work as public servants in regions. With the support of HCNM and ECMI, the Government of Georgia conducted needs analysis with a purpose to identify the needs of labor market and prepare the students of ZZSPA in relevant professional development programs.

In order to promote access to higher education, special programmes have been elaborated aimed to promote enrolment of minority students in institutions of higher education. Practical implementation of the quota system for national minorities introduced in the Law on Higher Education in 2009, took place in 2010-2011. Armenian and Azerbaijani language speakers are being allocated 10% of all state university seats. In 2010, when the new system was launched, 180 Azerbaijani and 123 Armenian language speakers were admitted to Georgian state universities - representing an increase of more than 300% over the previous two years. State scholarships to national minority students also increased from 11 in 2008 to 213 in 2010. As of 2011-2012, the quota will also embrace Abkhazian and Ossetian language speakers.

Let me emphasize that numerous education initiatives, including the preservation and strengthening of the knowledge of the Abkhaz language, constitute the priority of the Government of Georgia under the State Strategy. Besides promoting Georgian as a second language, authorities implement policy aimed to strengthen knowledge of native language among minorities. Particular attention is paid to translation of textbooks in minority languages and improvement of teachers’ skills. Among 2 131 public schools, there are 350 non-Georgian schools: 116 Armenian schools, 89 – Azerbaijani, 12 Russian schools and 133 – mixed (have two or more language sectors). The Ministry of Education and Science implements sub-program “Protection of Minority Languages”, under of which, the Ossetian Sunday School is fully financially supported by the Government Georgia.

Dear Colleagues,

Let me emphasize once again that with the assistance and close cooperation with the HCNM and other institutions, we are ready to further explore means to address the imminent needs of national minorities residing on the territory of Georgia, hence creating favorable conditions for their successful reintegration. We, once again would like to thank Ambassador Vollebaek and his team for their outstanding work.

Thank you!