

**OLIVER LOODE's STATEMENT ON CRIMEAN TATARS (Agenda item 7a, April 27)**

**in response to remarks by Expert Member of the Permanent Forum, Ms. Kara-Kys Arakchaa**

Madam Chair,

I would like to thank my colleague, Expert Member Kara-Kys Arakchaa, for visiting Crimea prior to this session and thus fulfilling the promise that she made to the Forum last year. I have not been to Crimea but have followed the situation of Crimean Tatars with great attention and concern.

Where I agree with my colleague is that some, indeed *many* problems face Crimean Tatars. But surely the main problem is not that some Crimean Tatars are unable to return to their homeland from Uzbekistan where they were deported in 1944.

What is more relevant and acute is the fact that key leaders of Crimean Tatars, including Mr. Refat Chubarov, Chairman of Crimean Tatar Mejlis (the executive organization of the Crimean Tatar representative body Kurultay) who spoke earlier today, have been banned by the Russian Federation from entering Crimea. This is a direct violation of UNDRIP which places such high value on self-determination and representative institutions of indigenous peoples.

Indeed, there are many grave violations of UNDRIP when it comes to the treatment of Crimean Tatars in occupied Crimea. These include effectively forcing Russian citizenship upon Crimean Tatars: those who prefer to keep their Ukrainian citizenship risk becoming foreigners in their own land and losing residence permits.

There have been multiple murders, abductions and attacks on Crimean Tatar activists, as well as acts of vandalism on religious sites that go uninvestigated. I know personally Crimean Tatar activists who have been physically attacked and where there has been no follow-up by law enforcement agencies.

There are fewer opportunities for Crimean Tatars to use or learn their language and culture in schools and universities. Crimean Tatar language media is under attack, as witnessed by the recent closure (non-renewal of the license for no clear or good reason) of ATR, the only fully Crimean Tatar language TV channel on the peninsula that enjoyed great popularity among Crimean Tatars and was an important medium of information and analysis about Crimean Tatar affairs.

This is by far not a complete list of violations of the rights of Crimean Tatars, nor was my intention to provide one here. Instead, I would like to align myself with Mr. Chubarov's call for the Russian Federation to ensure that the rights of Crimean Tatars as indigenous peoples of Crimea are fully respected in these difficult and complex times for Crimean Tatars.