

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I represent the indigenous people of Ukraine – the Krymchaks. Since 2014 our historic Native Land – the Crimea has been occupied and annexed illegally by Russia.

The occupation authorities in Crimea, including the Russian ombudsman, as well as Russian human rights organizations, do not recognize the right of indigenous people of Crimea to self-determination and to own representative institutions.

I would like to draw particular attention to the threat of the disappearance of Crimean Karaites and Krymchaks. Today the number of Crimean Karaites in Crimea is just over 500 people and the number of Krymchaks is just over 200.

As today the Ukrainian Parliament refused to pass the Law “On the Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine”; rather, now there are registered some drafts of laws that are not for the interests of any indigenous people – neither of the Krymchaks or the Karaites, nor of the Crimean Tatars.

Drafts of Laws on the Indigenous issues, registered in the Ukrainian Parliament, such as “On the Statute of the Crimean Tatar People in Ukraine” № 6315, were not evaluated by the regional and national human rights mechanisms for compliance with human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, which is not in accordance with the Declaration.

Ukraine as a state does not trust for the Indigenous Peoples’ organizations’ activities in the international arena obviously. Earlier, in 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia together jointly declared that the Foundation, which I do represent now, is “an organization watched in extremist and nationalist activities”¹.

This was done jointly by Russia and Ukraine 8 years before the illegal ban of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People by Russia, also as “an extremist organization”.

Today the absolute majority of the Ukrainian Parliament’s members and the Government’s functionaries, also as the Ukrainian scientists and Human Rights activists, understand very approximately what are the Indigenous Peoples according to the International Law are what are their Rights and Freedoms, guaranteed by the UN declaration, 2007 and other UN Standards.

It is very difficult for Indigenous Peoples, such as Karaites and Krymchaks, to visit UN Bodies and claim our Rights continually in the context of the modern Ukrainian-Russian interstate conflict. Therefore, it is very easy for both of these states to manipulate by the institution of Indigenous Peoples for Crimean problem, making the formal declarations and empty decisions only not the real steps.

The Parliament of Ukraine adopted a declaration on the recognition of the Crimean Tatar People as an Indigenous People only after the occupation and subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. However, the similar Parliamentary declaration was not done yet with respect to the Krymchak and Karaite Peoples, even though relevant drafts have been registered in the Ukrainian Parliament on several occasions in 2015-2016.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ http://www.mid.ru/rossia-nepravitel-stvennye-organizacii-i-oon/-/asset_publisher/aLRfN6MT9msV/content/id/338396