



## **INTERNATIONAL LEGAL GUARANTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES AND PROBLEMS IN THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

### **WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON MINORITY EDUCATION**

**Elements to the Conclusions of the seminar**

**by Mr M. A. Lebedev**

**Deputy Director, Department for Humanitarian Co-operation and Human Rights,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation**

#### *Unofficial translation*

The Seminar “International Legal Guarantees for the Protection of National Minorities and Problems in their Implementation with a Special Focus on Minority Education” held in Strasbourg on 18 October 2006 in the framework of the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe stressed the necessity of joint efforts of Council of Europe member states towards developing democratic principles for the protection of national minorities.

The participants underlined that this seminar as well as other important international events in this field, organized under the Russian Chairmanship in the CMCE (i.e. Volga Forum) in addition to seminars under the aegis of the Romanian Chairmanship (i.e. seminar in Braşov) gave an impetus to the work of the Council of Europe protecting the rights of national minorities and developing an inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

The Russian experts presented a wide picture of implementation of the provisions of the Framework Convention in the Russian Federation, explained their plans and programmes, as well as approaches and activities in promoting minorities scholar education and protecting numerous native languages on federal, regional and local levels, seeking strengthening multiculturalism and stability and linguistic diversity.

It was recognized that such international seminars attended by government representatives and experts from various European countries along with members of associations of national minorities and indigenous peoples are an important tool in formulating and implementing international guarantees for the protection of national minorities.

The seminar gave an excellent opportunity to analyse the best practice in protecting and securing the rights of national minorities, in particular, in the field of national minority education in the Member States of the Council of Europe, which should be recommended for dissemination and application.

It is evident that national minorities face in contemporary Europe growing problems associated with migration and emergence of new ethnic communities in Europe. That is why the need to engage national minorities in addressing issues relating to integration of migrants in the European communities, as well as requirement for the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities to address problems of “new minorities”.

Having discussed and analyzed the current situation around the international guarantees for the protection of national minorities, it was considered necessary to:

- support the efforts to reinforce international instruments for the protection of rights of national minorities;
- provide for holding of regular inter-state meetings on the level of executive and legislative authorities on the protection of rights of national minorities under the aegis of the Council of Europe;
- support the strengthening of national mechanisms for the protection of human rights and rights of national minorities both in national legislation and in the context of implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
- develop interaction between state authorities and civil society institutions in the area of protection of rights of national minorities;
- recommend the Member States of the Council of Europe to take advantage of the experience of Russia and other European nations in establishment of advisory bodies of national minorities for the state authorities to ensure a more effective participation of national minorities in the process of state decision-making in the area of interethnic relations and protection of rights of national minorities.

Some participants expressed concern that in some Member States of the Council of Europe national minorities are unable to fully exercise civic, economic and social rights due to political discrimination on ethnic grounds and suggested that the Council of Europe and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities pay more attention to the processes unfolding in those states.

The discussions showed the necessity to assign a high priority to education of minorities and ensure equal access of minorities to education with a special emphasis on the education of compactly living ethnic communities.

The participants supported the initiatives put forward at the International Conference “Dialogue of Cultures and Inter-religious Cooperation” held on 7 – 9 September 2006 in Nizhny Novgorod, other international initiatives aimed at protecting rights of national minorities and encouraged the Member States of the Council of Europe, to establish national organizational committees for the United Nations Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People.