



**KÜLGAZDASÁGI ÉS KÜLÜGYMINISZTERIUM**  
Nemzetközi Szervezetek Főosztálya

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Ferenc Dancs**  
**Deputy State Secretary for International Cooperation**  
**of MFAT of HUNGARY**

**UN Forum on Minority Issues**  
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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For historical reasons one of the main objectives of Hungary's foreign policy is the international protection of minority rights.

This Forum constitutes an outstanding platform for exchanging views, ideas and best practices regarding the protection and promotion of the rights of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities in general and this year minority youth in particular.

Education being key to empower minority youth, allow me to use this platform today to talk about the importance of ensuring the right of persons belonging to minorities to learn their mother tongue and receive education in their mother tongue.

According to the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1992: "States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue *or to have instruction in their mother tongue.*" Recommendations of the Inaugural Session of the Forum on Minority Issues confirmed the above, adding that "Specific forms of such opportunities should be chosen in consultation with persons belonging to minorities and taking account of their freely expressed wishes."

The first international agreement concerning education in minority languages was adopted within the framework of the Council of Europe in 1992, "the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages". With its ratification, States Parties undertake to ensure fully or partially the education in minority languages on different levels of their educational system, according to their choice and in conformity with the Charter.

Consequently, we can state that the right of national minorities to receive education in their mother tongue is a self-evident fundamental right recognized in international human rights instruments. Until now, this right has been recognized also by the laws of Ukraine and enjoyed by its national minorities. However, Article 7 of the newly adopted Ukrainian Education Act substantially limits this right for students of secondary schools (grade 5 and higher) and students of higher education.



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Ladies and Gentlemen, more than 200.000 Hungarians live in Ukraine in the Trans-Carpathian region. For them from age 10, the language of education shall be the Ukrainian according to the new law.

We believe that the means employed by Ukraine place excessive burden on national minorities and are not proportionate to the aim pursued. Hungary recognizes the role of state languages and the education of a state language as a key instrument for integration of individuals into society, including national minorities. Enhancing the role of a state language and its education, however, under no circumstances can justify limitations on existing linguistic rights of national minorities. Preservation of identity and culture should be seen as a prerequisite of long-term peace, stability and prosperity of the society as a whole.

Thank you.