**Item 7: International Decade of Indigenous Languages**

**11 July 2024**

*Speaking time: 3 min*

**Thank you Mr. Chair,**

I wish to thank the Expert Mechanism for the opportunity to speak today and for your continued efforts focused on the protection of indigenous peoples worldwide.

Over the past decade, the Indigenous people of Ukraine, particularly the Crimean Tatars, have faced constant human rights violations due to the Russian Federation’s illegal occupation of Ukraine’s Autonomous Republic of Crimea and its ongoing aggression against my country.

Since 2014, Russian occupiers have not only deprived Crimean Tatars of their freedom but have also targeted their core identity, culture, traditions, and mother tongue. The use of the Crimean Tatar language in Crimea has been significantly restricted, including the reduction of opportunities for young Crimean Tatars to receive education in their native language.

Before 2014, there were 384 classes in Crimean schools where children studied the Crimean Tatar language. Now, Russia persists in pursuing deliberate language erasure. The occupation has led to the switch of general secondary education institutions to the Russian language and curriculum, the replacement of history textbooks, and the introduction of "political instructors" at schools in the occupied territories.

Moreover, in complete disregard for the international legal system, the Russian Federation continues to ignore the ICJ ruling that orders Russia to lift the ban on the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people and to ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language in the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine).

In his latest report, the Secretary-General underlined that the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation must ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language and that instruction in and learning of the Crimean Tatar language meet the demand for such education options.

Despite facing blatant aggression, Ukraine remains unwavering in its commitment to protecting its indigenous population. To revitalize the Crimean Tatar language, the Ukrainian Government approved a decree to develop its spelling using a Latin-based alphabet. In line with the goals of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the Ukrainian Government adopted the Strategy for the Development of the Crimean Tatar Language for 2022-2032.

Given the continued suffering of Ukraine's indigenous people under Russian occupation, we believe that relevant human rights mechanisms and bodies will closely monitor and adequately respond to these violations.

To this end, I wish to reaffirm Ukraine’s openness to cooperation with EMRIP in further strengthening the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples’ rights.

**I thank you**