



Cultural integration or integration culture?

➤ Statement of Russia to the second draft

1) English as a lingua franca

English is the current lingua franca of international business, science, technology and aviation. In Russia, English is the major foreign language at school and is considered to be a language for intercultural and international business communication. Its domestic functions are limited to some pragmatic usage and education. The pragmatic usage of English is mostly observed in advertising, brand names, company names, and others. English words in Russia are associated with prestige, elite style, success, and progress and thus attract customers. English is an education discipline to study at a secondary and tertiary school, though more and more elementary schools and even kindergartens introduce English classes in their curricula. English for non-majors is learned as an academic discipline, with the focus on developing students' communicative competences and ability to read professional literature. There are mass media in English (for example, *the Moscow Times*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *Vladivostok Times*, and other newspapers) however, they are not generally addressed to the Russian readership but are intended for international businessmen, tourists, students and other guests. Like many other languages, today's Russian is seriously affected by English and undergoes dramatic changes.

Belonging to the Expanding Circle, Russia is open to English as a *lingua franca*. We also support the suggestion of the Forum for the 21st century to create a commission formed by native speaking professionals from the academic field. However, we cannot agree with its proposal on financing by 1 % of the nation's GDP. Russia devotes nearly 4 % of its GDP to education and is willing to finance the functioning of the Commission and creation of educational materials by **0,01 %** of this amount, which represents more than **\$5 000 million**. Moreover, a great number of problems are yet to be solved in this country. Some of them require administrative efforts in language policy, which should facilitate using English as a *lingua franca* and spreading Russian culture via English. Therefore Russia believes that via English as a universal language our huge cultural heritage will become known to the global community. Besides, if the Forum considers the option of adding a second complementing language to English, we will propose Russian language, since it is spoken by almost 300 million people worldwide and in many our neighbor countries it's either the first or the second foreign language learned.

2) Secularization and „believing without belonging“

Church-state relations are an inseparable part of Russia's political history. For centuries, these relations have been subject to constant change. According to the Constitution



the **Russian Federation is a secular state** in which all religious associations are equal before the law. The constitution also guarantees freedom of religious choice and practice. Federal legislation, as well as the legislation of the republics, should be in accordance with these clearly formulated principles. The 'secularity' of a state does not entail the marginalization of religion. A secular state should take account of the historical role and importance of each religion. Nevertheless, The Russian federation may legitimately award Orthodoxy a position of *primus inter pares* and privileges of honour in comparison with other religions on the basis of proportionality. These should not, however, take the form of legal advantages. Orthodoxy can perfectly well play the role of 'official' religion of Russia, but it should not be a 'state' religion. Each country should promote dialogue and harmony between and within religions. It would be advisable for all the participating countries to establish a system of bilateral agreements between each religious association and the state and to create a fiscal system that allows citizens who declare that they belong to a given religious faith to devote part of their taxes to the financial support of that faith. This system should be legalized in all participating countries.

3) Multiculturalism – prevention of intra-national conflicts

Russia is a multinational state with almost 200 different nationalities and has inherited many of the nationality problems from the former Soviet Union. Our country consists of 83 federal subjects which are of equal federal rights in the sense that they have equal representation in the Federation Council. There are twenty-one republics, which are meant to be home to a specific ethnic minority. They are nominally autonomous; each has its own constitution, president, and parliament and is represented by the federal government in international affairs. According to the Russian Constitution all forms of discrimination are banned and Russia seeks the equality of its citizens, allies and stateless persons to prohibit discrimination within the multiethnic population of the Russian federation.

The State Duma of the Russian Federation has adopted several laws and bills to amend and supplement the Federal Act on autonomous ethnic cultural organizations. Regarding the suggestion of the Forum to create a special body for maintaining democratic multiculturalism, Russian *State Duma's Committee for Nationalities Affairs* has drafted a bill on a **commissioner** reporting to the Federal Assembly on the rights of peoples living in the Russian Federation. It is intended that the commissioner will be an independent, public-law institution tasked with parliamentary oversight of State protection of the rights of the diverse peoples of the Russian Federation and promoting their socio-economic, ethnic and cultural development. The commissioner's primary task will be to consider "ethnically related" complaints against State agencies, voluntary organizations and officials that violate the rights of the peoples living in the Russian Federation. The commissioner will be able to resolve conflicts through persuasion, public exposure or recommendations to prosecute. The



Committee has also set up a subcommittee on the ethnic cultural development of the Russian nation and other peoples of the Russian Federation, a subcommittee on small peoples, ethnic minorities and language policy, and a subcommittee on the problems of the northern Caucasus, repressed peoples, refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Besides, the Committee's task will be to monitor and survey the situation in Russia to prevent any kind of demonstration of racism, xenophobia or affirmative actions. However, we cannot agree with the Forum's statement that the state should intervene in religious and cultural practices, unless these practices jeopardize national security.

4) Rights of minorities

All Russian citizens enjoy equal rights regardless of ethnicity or race. Russia's law enforcement agencies defend civil peace and order, acting solely on the basis of laws and regulations currently in force and without distinguishing between lawbreakers on ethnic grounds. The social status of ethnic Chechens is no different from that of other ethnic groups, as indicated by the socio-economic status of Chechens, the extent of their involvement in the political and business elite and their extensive network of ethnic cultural organizations in various states of the Russian Federation.

Although Russia fully defends civil rights and tries to combat terrorism, there have been several attempts of ethnic groups to solve intra-national conflicts by attacking non-combatants. Therefore we consider crucial to engage scholars and nongovernmental organizations about possible approaches for preventing and resolving intra-national conflicts. To strengthen religious tolerance and social harmony and encourage interfaith dialogue, the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia, in cooperation with voluntary organizations and religious associations, is undertaking a range of measures to advocate peaceableness and to combat manifestations of xenophobia and ethnic and religious intolerance in society and the Ministry organizes regular meetings, briefings and conferences between academics and ecclesiastics of the Russian Orthodox Church, Muslim clerics and representatives of other faiths. Against the backdrop of the threat from international terrorism and religious extremism, there is an increasing need in the Russian Federation for a cross-disciplinary approach to developing religious education, primarily Muslim education. We suggest to the Forum for the 21st Century to implement such a strategy to establish an ongoing process for training skilled professionals and experts in Islamic history and culture with a view to their employment in professional religious schools and private educational institutions. Such persons would be trained to instill values of tolerance in their students and to prevent discrimination and xenophobia on the basis of the equality of ethnic cultures and religions. However, we do not see the need of building an international foundation of these experts. We suggest creating an internal body on a national level in each state under the Ministry of



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Education providing information to the citizens and students. Each participant should dedicate a percentage of the budget expenditures for education to their best possibilities for creation of this body and propagation of common shared values in the national society.



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