

APPEAL

TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Forum of Hungarian Representatives of the Carpathian Basin

as the representative political body for the elected representatives of 12 million Hungarians living in the states of the region,

on the 100th anniversary of the peace treaties ending World War I and the 30th anniversary of the democratic regime changes in East-Central Europe

is turning to the international community with the following appeal:

- 1.** It is a historical fact that the peace treaties ending World War I deprived Hungarians - who had lived in their European homeland for a thousand years - of their right to national self-determination, and as a result, three out of ten people speaking Hungarian as their mother tongue, i.e. almost 3.3 million Hungarians were transferred together with their land of birth under the jurisdiction of other states, where they have been living for a century now in changing polities and in declining numbers.
- 2.** It is a statistical fact that while the number of non-ethnic-Hungarians – not including the German-speaking population – living on the territory of contemporary Hungary grew from the 4,935,000 recorded by the 1787 census to 8.515.000 according to the 1910 censuses, the number of Hungarians under the jurisdiction of Hungary's neighbours declined – during the period between 1920 and 2011 - from a total of 3,278,000 to 2,090,000, according to census data.
- 3.** Despite all the hardships of the 20th century - i.e. the attempts of ethnic cleansing directed at the Hungarian communities who found themselves outside the borders of Hungary, the ambitions for ethnic homogenisation and the emigration triggered by the social and economic difficulties characterising the region after the democratic transitions in 1990 - while suffering painful losses, Hungarians in neighbouring countries preserved their national identity rooted in their mother tongue, their culture and homeland through great sacrifices and achievements. As a result, Hungarians constitute a relative national majority in the Carpathian Basin even at present, and the Hungarian language is the most frequently spoken language in the region. This objective fact characterising the region's ethnic

map assigns increased responsibility on the Hungarian state and on Europe's responsible political forces with respect to the historic shaping of the fate of the Carpathian Basin in the future.

4. Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin who have lived under the jurisdiction of states bordering Hungary for a century, managed to remain faithful to their land of birth and to the Hungarian nation while they also became loyal, value creating citizens and communities of the countries they live in. Throughout the past three decades – in a period when Europe itself was not without violent enforcements of ethnic interests - Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries have fought for their rights consistently using constitutional and peaceful means. Hungarians in neighbouring countries have been steadfast supporters of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations and integration of all of the region's countries, and through their political associations are making an indispensable contribution to maintaining the region's geopolitical stability and interethnic peace. Yet throughout the past three decades, the Hungarian communities have been continuously faced with numerous forms of discrimination in certain countries around Hungary. Negative discrimination manifested itself in central and regional development policy, the restitution of individually or collectively held properties confiscated during Communist times, educational rights, the rights associated with the use of the mother tongue, with participation in government administration and judicial proceedings, and also in public political discourse. State authorities of certain neighbouring countries consciously intimidate and humiliate the members and leaders of the Hungarian communities. Similarly, Hungarians in neighbouring countries frequently suffer from discrimination when their rights – otherwise set forth in laws and in various forms of legislation – are infringed upon in practice, and when the actual application of such legislation is thwarted.
5. National diversity can be a resource rather than a source of threat for the whole of Europe and for every nation and state in the East-Central European region. To this end, it is necessary for all the region's states to recognise – in the spirit of article 4 of the Treaty on the European Union - the right to national identity as a fundamental human right, and to formulate – with a view to providing an adequate response to the challenges of the 21st century - its political and legal content together. They should then also apply in practice the right defined in the above manner to the national communities living in numerical majority or minority in their country.
6. It is not by redrawing state borders but by changing state policies, through legal and political means giving people the right to national identity tangibly and in a modern way that the preserving effect of the homeland can be increased for all in East-Central Europe and the Carpathian Basin included. This is a fundamental precondition for the security and prosperity of the region's inhabitants.

- 7.** One of the best foundations for long-term security, political and social stability, economic development and prosperity in East-Central Europe and the Carpathian Basin included, could be for all states to recognise the right to national identity in respect of all of their citizens and the communities of their citizens, to allow them to inherit their mother tongue, the culture of their forefathers, the familiarity of their homeland, and to allow them to hand all of this down to their descendants. Alienation from the mother tongue and the culture, the eroded attraction of the land of birth, as well as the forced emigration from it are the most immediate dangers threatening every nation and nation-state of the region in our globalising world.
- 8.** Having regard to the above, we call on parliaments of sovereign nations in East-Central Europe those of the Carpathian Basin included, to jointly appeal the United Nations Organisation and European international organisations to recognise the right to national identity as a fundamental human right.
- 9.** We call on the parliaments of sovereign nations in East-Central Europe and those of the Carpathian Basin included, to enshrine in their constitutions as a fundamental right the right to national identity, and to also guarantee this right in practice to every autochthonous national community living in the territory of their states. Similar to the solution laid down in the Fundamental Law of Hungary, in addition to the national communities making up the majority, autochthonous national communities in minority who meet certain pre-defined criteria should also be granted state constituent status enshrined in the constitution.
- 10.** Having regard to the more than fifty million people who belong to autochthonous minority communities – and also pay their taxes and vote - in EU Member States, we call on the European Commission to initiate the enactment of binding EU legislation on the initiatives launched by the Federal Union of European Nationalities in 2013 concerning the protection of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities.
- 11.** We call on the citizens of EU Member States to support the European Citizens' Initiative launched by the Szekler National Council currently in process, intended to strengthen the economic and cultural development of European regions.
- 12.** We call on the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe to lend their support to the ambitions of the parliaments of those European states who wish to make the right to national identity a universal human right in the 21st century.

Budapest, 28 May 2020