Good morning,

First of all I would like to convey the salutations on behalf of my organisation. UNPO is a member organisation. Its members are de facto states like Taiwan, Somaliland, Abkhazia, Kosova, occupied territories like Tibet, indigenous peoples around the world, minorities and oppressed peoples in general. Crimean Tatars are the member of UNPO from 1991.

The issue of today is profound situation of injustice that is absolutely a shame for Europe, Europe on its large hold, referring to the Europe of the Council of Europe, in which Ukraine is a member. The question of Crimean Tatars regards the European history. It started in the modern age in 1944, when the leader of the Communist regime of that time, Stalin, decided to proceed to a deportation of the entire population to a far east of the Soviet Union.

We have to consider that at the end of the first year the half of the population, thanks to the terrible conditions, arranged for them has been hostile in order to inoculate the Crimean Tatar people. Half of the population is undoubtedly recognise this as an act of genocide. It seems that, in order to proceed, to get some justice for the Crimean Tatar people, first of all it will be important to break an ice legally on the aspects of the international law. This act of genocide has been arbitrated. So, what kind of compensation and what kind of restoration of the rights of Crimean Tatars should be taken in order to re-establish some rights for the people?

It needs to be considered that the return of Crimean Tatar people to their ancestral territory region Crimea started only at the end of 80ies. I remember, at that time I was living a little bit in Moscow, having a demonstration of the Crimean Tatars on the place of the Manege, where the police was stationed just in the beginning of the proceeding that lead to the collapse of the Communist regime then in 1991. Since that time and even after the new situation, the Ukraine and other states recognition, it remains the same. That means no rights have been recognised for them. Their land was given in 1944 to other people and to the state. That means that they start returning as gypsy people with no territory, trying to occupy marginal land and trying to build some home. This procedure, in which legality has been acquired during the process or even after, has always a kind of political justification but never has been decently considered under the legal aspect. Today there is the same situation with the settlements of Crimean Tatar people in the Autonomous Region of Crimea.

What has been important and needs to be recognised to the leadership of Crimean Tatars is the use of non-violence. For more than 40 years these people continue to use the non-violent methodology that made them pretty unique considering the European aspect. We know that many movements for self-determination had to use violence or to participate in violent acts. I do not want to talk about. But the characteristic of Crimean Tatars is that there was for 40 years a non-violent Ghanaian methodology of the movement. It has been forgotten. Non-violence has never been trendy. And sometimes we ourselves forget it. This needs to be evaluated and recognised.
I think also that some conference needs to be held in order to study how they did. First the Communist regime and the Brezhnev era, then the collapse of Communism and the new Russia, the new Ukraine. How have they been able to keep that red line, that continuity of nonviolence and brilliant and skilled political activity? The most capability of that should be recognised to the leader Mustafa Jemilev. I am proud that my organisation has helped along with a group in European Parliament, led by Leonidas Donskis, to candidate Mustafa Jemilev to the Nobel Peace Prize. We hope that the Nobel Peace Prize committee will evaluate his characteristics and they will honour his leadership and the way that Crimean Tatars with peaceful instruments are still fighting for their rights.

The restoration of Crimean Tatars’ rights is not only a question of land. The more urgent legal question and linguistic question are usually related to a particularly articulated situation. The Crimea is an autonomous region of the Ukraine, but the majority of the population is Russian, then Ukrainians are the first minority, the second are Tatars, who are representing around 12%. That means it is difficult to see a dangerous “turkisation” or “islamisation” of the Crimea. But the political fighting in Crimea is particularly harsh and tough. I think, personally, that Crimea can become a first example of a good concept of autonomy. There are some regions in Europe like South Tirol, Catalunia and even Flanders in Belgium, who have reached successful, important level of autonomy. Catalunia more than anyone. If such kind of autonomy could be reached and become effective in Crimea, it would be an enormous political quality reached there, because it would be the first example in the Eastern Europe of an effective autonomy in democratic system and rule of law.

The question of Crimean Tatars needs to be solved. It is a shame for the Ukrainian government, it is a shame for the Russian government, it is a shame for the Council of Europe, in which the question has been addressed a couple of times by Mustafa Jemilev himself. Instead, after 40 years of continuous activities of Crimean Tatars the situation is still the same. UNPO is initiating an international campaign in order to try to help Crimean Tatars to reach at least the good level of information. We are starting to call this kind of Forum that would put together some governments, some representatives of national and European Parliaments, some organisations of civil society in Ukraine and in Europe to tackle this issue and to try to find a consensus on the way to proceed in order to get this restoration of human rights and legal rights, lands rights and linguistic rights and the cultural rights of the Crimean Tatar people.

I think it would be necessary to proceed quickly, because harshness of political life in Crimea, that I have visited 2 years ago. And it is particularly dangerous. The entire question needs to be improved quickly. I think it could of interest for the Ukrainian government to have a kind of partnership with the European Union, who can handle the responsibility to support it not only politically but even financially in order to build a more effective civil society in Crimea. That does not mean only to support the Crimean Tatars but also the Ukrainian and Russian organisations in order to change the dangerous political atmosphere in Crimea.

This meeting is the first one in the Parliament. Last year we have organised a hearing with Mustafa Jemilev. We are now proceeding to organise a major conference in the European Parliament before Christmas with involvement of some representatives of governments, of members of the European
Parliament, in order to create the more effective and at the same time relaxed ground to develop this kind of Forum on the Crimean Tatars rights restoration.

Thank you.