

Dear friends!

The democratic changes of the last decades of the 20th century are symbolically associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall. This remarkable event in the political history of the late 20th century marked irreversible changes in the whole world. The ideological, political, social constraints that for many decades restrained the human contacts of the peoples of Europe and the whole world by the totalitarian regimes have collapsed and gone into oblivion.

This outstanding historical event is directly related to the historical fate of the Circassian people.

Democratic changes in the USSR, later in the Russian Federation fully allowed beginning of the process of overcoming the alienation and disunity of Circassians around the world, which lasted more than a century and a half. They opened the way for the contacts of the Circassians of Russia with the Circassian Diaspora abroad. An integral part of this process is the repatriation of the Circassians to their historical homeland.

Undoubtedly, even in previous eras, despite all adversities, individual human contacts with the historical homeland took place. However, only since the formation of a new, democratic Russian Federation, it became possible to establish full-fledged ties between the historical homeland and the Circassian Diaspora abroad.

Concerning the Republic of Adygea, the opening of the branch of the Rodina Society in Maykop on November 14, 1989 played an important role in establishing ties with the Circassian Diaspora.

Since that time, systemic contacts with Circassians from abroad began, visits to the historical homeland became regular, the first cultural and humanitarian projects began to be implemented. This is the time of creation of state structures for interaction with the Circassian Diaspora abroad, and the formation of civil society institutions, in particular, the formation of a broad network of Adyghe Khase, one of the strategic tasks of which was the development of extensive relations with the Circassian Diaspora abroad, the creation of legal, political conditions for the repatriation of Circassians on the historical homeland.

There is no doubt; the most difficult is the realization of the right to repatriation to the historical homeland. This process involves overcoming a variety of legal, cultural, socio-economic, psychological factors. Ultimately, repatriation leads to a weakening and, subsequently, to the breaking of legal

and social ties with the country of birth, establishing of legal relations with the new state, integration into a new society, a new socio-economic system, with its legal, cultural value traditions.

The realization of the right to repatriation is in direct relationship with the establishment of a legal connection - the acquisition of the citizenship of the new country by the repatriate, at the initial stage of the USSR, later of the Russian Federation.

The first legal act that opened right to the repatriation became the law of the USSR "On citizenship of the USSR" on May 23, 1990. On the basis of the Act of Union, the Circassian Diaspora, began to obtain citizenship of the USSR as in diplomatic missions of Russia abroad and resettlement in Russia. Later than November 28, 1991 was adopted the Law of the RSFSR "On citizenship of the RSFSR".

This time was a period of complex political and socio-economic transformations in the Russian Federation. The collapse of the USSR, the formation of a new political system in the Russian Federation, the emergence of a market economy led to a significant drop in the standard of living in the country. In many regions of the post-Soviet space, interethnic relations have escalated, which in a number of cases resulted in open large-scale military conflicts. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from conflict zones have appeared in Russia. All this had a negative impact on the attractiveness of the historical homeland as a region of potential repatriation of Circassians from abroad.

It should be noted that in the Caucasus there were romantic ideas about the desire of Circassians of the Diaspora for a mass return to their historical homeland. However, the reality showed that Circassians of the Diaspora, living in relatively stable and developing countries, in their absolute majority, linked their prospects with the countries of residence. The flow of repatriates to the Caucasus in these conditions was insignificant, at the same time, the ties between the historical homeland and Circassian Diaspora have significantly strengthened, and cultural and humanitarian ties became regular, systematic.

In 1991, internal contradictions in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia escalated. Later they resulted in an open war between the republics that were part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, eventually resulting in the aggression of NATO countries against the SFRY. Against the background of increasing humanitarian problems on July 25, 1993, the Circassians of Yugoslavia appealed to the President of the Republic of Adygea for assistance

in repatriation to their historical homeland. The appeal of the heads of Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia to the President of the Russian Federation on the repatriation of the Circassian community from the Autonomous Province of Kosovo to the Republic of Adygea received the support of the President of Russia and the Government of the Russian Federation.

Upon the instructions of the President of the Russian Federation in 1998, the Government of the Russian Federation issued a Decree "On Urgent Measures of State Support for the Resettlement of Adygs (Circassians) from the Autonomous Province of Kosovo of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the Republic of Adygea." The Government of the Russian Federation has also allocated funds for the construction of the Mafehabl village for repatriates in the Republic of Adygea. This year Adygea celebrated the 20th anniversary of this event.

35 families of Circassian repatriates were resettled from the Autonomous province of Kosovo to the Republic of Adygea. The implementation of the project of resettlement of Kosovo Circassians was the first major humanitarian project of repatriation of Circassians to their historical homeland.

The further process of resettlement of Circassians to the Russian Federation took place within the General norms of the Russian migration legislation.

In 2010, the Law was amended which allowed the Republic of Adygea, in cooperation with the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, compatriots living abroad, and for international humanitarian cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) to intensify cultural and humanitarian cooperation with the Circassian Diaspora abroad in the sphere of education, exchanges of creative groups, the implementation of youth and other humanitarian projects.

In 2012, the Russian Federation adopted a Government Program to facilitate the voluntary resettlement of compatriots living abroad. Circassian public in Russia repeatedly appealed to the Federal government for the implementation of this government program in the Republic of Adygea, Kabardino-Balkar and Karachay-Cherkessia republics. On behalf of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, the authorities of Adygea and Kabardino-Balkaria are developing this program. In the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, the program was adopted and approved by the Federal government in 2018.

The resettlement of the Circassians of Syria to their historical homeland in the conditions of civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic is one of the most complicated humanitarian problems currently being implemented in the Russian Federation.

In 2011, the public authorities of the Russian Federation began to receive appeals from Circassians of Syria with a request for assistance in resettlement to the Russian Federation. A week after the first appeal to the Parliament of Adygea of Circassians from Syria, the Parliament of the Republic of Adygea addressed the Federal Assembly (Parliament) of the Russian Federation to assist in the repatriation of Circassians to their historical homeland.

At the request of parliamentarians from Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea in 2012, a delegation of the Federation Council with the participation of Circassian non-governmental organizations of Russia was sent to Syria to have a meeting with the Circassian public in Syria. Arrived, the group noted that the massive desire for repatriation to their historical homeland among Syrian Circassians is not observed, while about 200-250 families expressed an aspiration for resettlement to Russia.

From this time, the process of resettlement of Circassians from Syria to Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia begins. As the situation in Syria worsened, the flow of immigrants to Russia increased.

It is worth paying attention to a number of significant factors. Syria was a country that traditionally supports multilateral communications with Russia. Many Syrian citizens received education in the USSR or the Russian Federation. Leaders of the Circassian community of Syria maintained connections with the historical homeland. More than 2500 Circassians of Syria had citizenship of the Russian Federation. At the same time, there was no proper knowledge about Russia in the broad strata of the Circassian society of Syria. Relations with the historical homeland were maintained by an insignificant part of the society. There were no repatriation sentiments among the Circassians of Syria, not even among those who had Russian citizenship. At the same time, the growth of the humanitarian disaster in Syria took place on such a rapid scale that the community did not have possibility to understand and rethink its position and prospects in a proper way. Therefore, the flow of Syrian Circassians in the conditions of war went in different directions. To Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, US, EU, Russia, Abkhazia. Many have changed their countries of residence many times. Thus, Circassians from Syria who arrived in Russia in search of the most

acceptable social conditions often moved between Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Adygea and Abkhazia.

It should be noted that Russia was not ready for such a rapid and large-scale outflow of people from Syria. There are no temporary accommodation centers capable of receiving significant flows of people. There is no developed system of social support for refugees.

Under these conditions, in 2012, the government commission for the reception of Syrian citizens was established in the Republic of Adygea under the direction of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Adygea. It included ministers of the government of Adygea, representatives of Adyghe Khase.

Fundraising for refugees under the patronage of the authorities began. Arrived refugees began to be located in the residential sector. Later, the process of their resettlement in the countryside began. Land for housing construction was allocated for Circassian repatriates from Syria. The federal government granted Circassians from Syria quotas for higher education in Russia at the expense of the Russian budget. The children were enrolled in schools of the Republic of Adygea. In addition, a significant number of children received the opportunity to study in the colleges of Adygea.

Repatriation takes place within the framework of the general norms of Russian migration legislation. Syrian citizens or stateless persons arriving from Syria to the Russian Federation, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, the Republic of Adygea receive at the initial stage of temporary refuge, temporary residence permit, then a residence permit in the Russian Federation and subsequently Russian citizenship. The total period of obtaining Russian citizenship is five years from the date of obtaining a residence permit in Russia. The main requirement is knowledge of the Russian language, legal employment, compliance with the Constitution and laws of the Russian Federation.

The legislation also provides other simplified procedures for obtaining Russian citizenship through the recognition of a native speaker of the Russian language, which requires passing an examination in the Russian language in the Commission under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Adygea.

The preferential procedure for granting citizenship also applies to persons receiving higher education in Russia, investors, participants of the state program of resettlement of compatriots from abroad.

Russia is currently in the process of liberalization of migration legislation aimed at simplifying the procedures for both legalization of stay in the country and obtaining Russian citizenship.

The main problem of repatriates in Russia is related to integration into modern Russian society. Knowledge of the Russian language, the basics of Russian legislation, the labor market are required. In the absence of a developed system of social support for refugees, immediate employment became an important factor in the social self-sufficiency of repatriates. Knowledge of the Circassian language by many repatriates has become a positive factor of primary communication in society.

We would like to note that in the broad context of human rights and freedoms, only repatriates from Syria, who arrived in their historic homeland, realize the full range of their rights. In particular, the right to restore and preserve the native language, the right to restore and preserve Circassian culture and Circassian identity. Nowhere in the world, except for Russia, the realization of these fundamental human rights by Circassians is impossible.

Meanwhile, the assimilation of refugees, as it takes place in Europe, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and the United States, is an unlawful act, as it undermines the fundamental human right to ethno-cultural identity.

In a broader context, with regard to the Circassian Diaspora, I would like to note that the process of integration is most successful among students and children studying in the system of public education in Russia.

In light of this, the development of projects in the field of higher and secondary special education in Russia is the most important direction, providing high-quality integration into modern Russian society.

The fact remains that the Diaspora is still poorly acquainted with its historical homeland. Over the past decades, the circle of people visiting their historic homeland is mostly older and middle-aged people who do not connect their prospects with their historical homeland. The scale of the visits to the historical homeland by young people is so insignificant that it can be stated that, despite all the positive changes of the last decades, the youth of the Circassian Diaspora still knows little about their historical homeland. Ethnic tourism is also still underdeveloped.

Thus, despite the unprecedented changes that have taken place in the last three decades around us, the Circassian diaspora abroad is still poorly acquainted with the historical homeland. The main reason for this state of

affairs is not connected with opposition or restrictions on the part of state institutions, but only with the general passivity of non-governmental organizations involved in this field of activity and their leaders.

Meanwhile, the potential of cooperation is inexhaustible, relying on the experience of previous generations, it is necessary to develop various integration programs again and again. The priority at the same time is tourism, youth exchanges, education and culture. Combining efforts, we must reach a new level of knowledge of each other. Only having overcome this threshold, it is possible to increase work in other directions.

Dear friends!

It is obvious to us that our people have no place on the imaginary "island of prosperity" far from the homeland, in the middle of a huge ocean of peoples and states that for two centuries were only "quicksand", ruthlessly absorbing our people, our culture and our language.

Our "shining city upon a hill" is the Caucasus. The land of our great ancestors. Our future can be connected only with it. This is the continuation of our historical path.

Thank you for your attention!