



Roundtable "Culture of Tolerance: The Problem of Formation"

On 6 November the Bishkek Press Club held a Roundtable on "Culture of Tolerance: the Problem of Formation" within the framework of the project "Increasing Tolerance Among Young People in Conflict Prevention" with the support of the OSCE Center in Bishkek. Representatives of state bodies, NGOs and international organizations, as well as representatives of religious organizations, participated in the Roundtable.

List of participants:

Moderator - Muratbek Imanaliev, president of the Institute for Public Policy

Ishenbai Abdurazakov, social activist of KR
Erlan Abdylidaev, director of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Tolkun Bekbulatova, director of the Department for Child Protection
Andrey Butsman, senior program coordinator of the OSCE
Vera Vygovskaya, executive director of the public association "Egalité"
Tatiana Vygovskaya, general director of the public association "Egalité"
Ivan Kamenko, program director of the public association "Egalité"
Lira Karagulova, head of the public association "Mejkulturnoe obrazovanie" ("Intercultural Education")
Yusur Loma, advisor to the Mufti of KR
Kadyr Malikov, expert of the Independent analytical research center of religion, law and politics
Shamshybek Mamyrov, head of the reform department of the Ministry for Internal Affairs of KR
Sergei Masaulov, director of the Institute of Strategic Analysis and Evaluation under the President of KR
Anar Musabaeva, independent expert on socio-economic issues
Svetlana Pak, executive secretary of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan
Sovetbek Sarbanov, head of the department of science, innovation and technical information.

Participants of the project "Increasing Tolerance Among Young People in Conflict Prevention" also attended.

Muratbek Imanaliev: Tolerance is the result of some education, or, if we take it in a broader context, it is the result of the operation or existence of culture. Perhaps, here we are talking about a certain social element. I might be wrong. Today we are going to discuss it. I would like to present our speakers.

Tatiana Vygovskaya is the director general of the public association "Egalite." Next - Svetlana Pak, she is the executive secretary of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan. Yusur Loma is an adviser to the Mufti of our country. And Sergei Masaulov is the director of the Institute of Strategic Analysis and Evaluation under the President of KR.

I would like to give the floor to Tatiana Vygovskaya.

Tatiana Vygovskaya: Thank you very much. I would like to welcome all roundtable participants. The topic of my report is as follows: "Formation of the Culture of Tolerance in Kyrgyzstan."

Talking about the culture of tolerance, I should note that there is no clear definition of it. Let us take a definition that the culture of tolerance is a culture of interaction between people at all levels: personal, social, economic and political.

If we talk about the culture of tolerance in Kyrgyzstan, we should mention two major aspects. The first aspect is the historic development of the territory and the people. Since ancient times, different peoples coexisted in this territory. There were no global shocks, there was no global violence on the



grounds of hostility towards each other or between religions. Thus, from a certain point of view, the culture of tolerance in Kyrgyzstan is a historically conditioned thing.

If we talk about tolerance of the people, the Kyrgyz is one of the most tolerant peoples. Several factors have proved this. First, the Kyrgyz have always accepted non-Kyrgyz people, and even integrated with them. Non-Kyrgyz people received the same status as representatives of the Kyrgyz people. It was assimilation, and the great peoples that lived in this territory – the Saka, Uysuns and others - were assimilated by the Kyrgyz, but not vice versa. The language remained Kyrgyz, the phenotype remained Kyrgyz, and the ethnicon - "Kyrgyz". These are the two most important indicators of the people and territory. This is what concerns the people and its history.

However, tolerance is a dynamic process, it is not static. Various stages of societal development affect the culture of tolerance and its formation. We are not going deeper into the history. Let's take the period of modernization since 1991. A well-established system was changed by another. Accordingly, the breakdown of public and economic stereotypes led to decreased level of tolerance in general. In tolerance, just like in conflict, the basic concept is value. If this value satisfies all, the level of conflict is, of course, low, and the level of tolerance is high. If this value does not satisfy people any longer, a conflict occurs and tolerance and the culture of interaction between people are low.

There is a low level of tolerance at the moment due to the following factors: overall globalization, the process of world globalization, and the society intolerant of innovation. I will briefly explain how globalization is related to tolerance. The Soviet Union was a quite isolated country. Access to resources was in the hierarchy of social interaction. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this social interaction has dramatically changed. Overall, globalization has brought such phenomena as, for example, credit programs, market economy, competition and so on. An individual in this society got lost. Values and stability have been infringed. There is no knowledge of how one should interact in this new environment, new world, and how one can get access to all these resources. Globalization has brought a wide range of resources, but it has not given an automatic access to them. Values are infringed, conflicts occur more often, tolerance is low. But, to a great extent, this is caused by the resistance to innovation. I think many people in their work faced the situation when people do not accept the innovation approach. All administrative, social and economic reforms first cause resistance, not because they are bad and unnecessary, but simply because people do not understand how an innovation would affect their lives, how they could use it and live with it. Accordingly, people become intolerant.

My last point is this: a man, lost in modern survival circumstances and in this system of interaction, has become less tolerant. Tolerance has been significantly reduced at the moment because too many innovations have been introduced and values have been violated. Therefore, at this stage, it will take fifty or sixty years to automatically align the level of tolerance in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, this process should be encouraged from outside. Thank you very much. I have finished.

Muratbek Imanaliev: Thank you, Tatiana. I would like to emphasize the problem you mentioned at the beginning of your speech - the issue of historicism in the culture of tolerance. Central Asia is a unique region; it is perhaps the only region in the world where large enclaves of cultural streams of virtually all world religions meet. I mean all the world religions. Even some ideological content was quite interestingly embedded in the social and mental life of Central Asia.

Now I would like to give the floor to Svetlana.

Svetlana Pak: Good day, dear participants! I would like to thank the Institute for Public Policy for the opportunity to express my view on the issues of tolerance. But I would like first to ask you a question. The term "tolerance," if we look from historical perspective, causes a mixed reaction. You know that the literal translation of the term (from Latin) means "patience." But today it is translated into Russian as tolerance. According to the Ozhegov dictionary, patience is the ability to resignedly endure something. It can be pain, suffering, something unpleasant, unwillingness to tolerate the presence of someone or something. Tolerance is a tolerant attitude towards anyone or anything. Tolerance also has two meanings: a non-strict, non-demanding attitude or an insulting, arrogant attitude. The roots of



these words by definition have a sense of forced unequal treatment.

But there is also a second meaning of "tolerance." This is a biological and medical term, which means full or partial absence of the immunologic reactivity, i.e. reduction or loss of human body's ability to develop antibodies in response to antigenic irritation. That's why I want to ask you: don't we create a precedent for the mass infection and weakening the immunity of the people at the gene level, by introducing borrowed terms? Let us think about it.

This is concerning the term "tolerance." Speaking to the point, naturally, creating an atmosphere of goodwill, mutual respect and harmony is one of the key factors of the gradual development of the society and the state, and the whole humanity in general. Today, in the era of globalization, standardization and technology development as noted by Tatiana, we are losing our diversity in the world of flora and fauna, as well as in the linguistic and ethnic-cultural world. Therefore, being aware of the importance and the need to preserve diversity, the UN adopted a declaration of conserving biodiversity of all forms. Based on this, the mission of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan is to promote and strengthen inter-ethnic harmony, civil peace, integration and unity of all peoples of Kyrgyzstan.

Our Assembly is called the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan. When we decided to give this name, we were told that we were making a mistake. We explained that we envisioned a horizon, when there would be a united people of Kyrgyzstan. Our mission is to promote this unity. Our name says much about it. Incidentally, the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan, established in 1995, was renamed the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in 2007, understanding what was at stake.

The Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, as a public organization, coordinates the processes of inter-ethnic relations in the country; it has been preserving and promoting the culture of ethnic public associations during fifteen years. The main feature is that all public organizations of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan carry out their work, relying solely on their own resources and the resources, attracted from their historical homelands. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the leaders of ethnic organizations, education is provided in the mother tongue in kindergartens, schools, universities. Thanks to the tireless work and energy of activists, creative collectives of amateur performances have been opened, one third of which the Ministry of Culture recognized highly professional; these collectives received the title "People's Collectives". Thanks to the initiative and devoted service to the people, there are eight ethnic radio stations broadcasting in native languages. With the support of scientists and funding from businessmen, ethnic organizations have conducted studies and produced a book on the history of many ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. Good management and people's diplomacy have attracted investment in Kyrgyzstan – investment in the economic, humanitarian, cultural, educational spheres. The Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan has worked its way up from the emergence of organizational structure and addressing the pressing problems of conservation and development of cultural identity of each member of the Assembly, to the recognition by the authorities and the public as a coordinating body in the ethnosphere. In the Presidential Course for renewal of the country, Kurmanbek Bakiyev noted that individualism, the spirit of the nation and the memory of ancestors are valued in Kyrgyzstan. He said, "We want to believe that the Kyrgyz society is a society of mutual respect and mutual support for all who live on our land. Our goal is to create a benevolent society. I believe that this concept today can harmonize various directions of spiritual and social interests. It does not contradict the variety of religious, political and cultural foundations of life of different social groups in Kyrgyzstan."

Vitality, patriotism and responsibility, the ability to come to consensus by sharing the interests with the view of ethno-cultural, religious and other characteristics, regardless the number or other factors while developing collegial decisions, give the ground for considering the Assembly, as a prototype of a new type of organization; skillfully using all the advantages and resources of diversity in its practical daily activities. Recognizing the importance and significance of ethno-cultural dialogue, as well as the ability to find common grounds when solving urgent problems of the society, the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan has developed a strategy for its development. Thus, a qualitatively new and important step has been made. The Assembly has developed its priorities for the near future, based on the need for a national idea in determining the contour of ethno-civic reality in light of the core



integrating role of the Kyrgyz culture. The ancient culture of the Kyrgyz retained the following features of national character: hospitality, kindness, ability to help everyone who needs it, mutual assistance and support, election of the supreme leaders for taking fateful decisions on the protection of the homeland and, at the same time, love for freedom, independence and the ability to take into consideration the advantage of the enemy or ally. It is a fertile ground for the creation of a new cultural outlook.

There is a word in the Kyrgyz language - "iykemduuluk"-, which means consent, friendliness, peace and love. Let the word "iykemduuluk" be translated into other languages to define tolerance, harmony, friendship and mutual assistance. I suggest translating the term "culture of tolerance" as "culture iykemduuluk." Incidentally, we had a precedence in 2003. When there were reforms in education, a working group was established, and many workshops were held with ethnic organizations. According to the OSCE standards, the term "national minorities" should be used. But all the leaders of the ethnic groups of the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan said that they were equally treated, so the term "national minorities" would discriminate them. They said that they would rather use the term "ethnic groups," "ethnic communities" and "ethnic organizations." When an official report was submitted in The Hague, representatives from Kyrgyzstan were able to convince all OSCE experts and the international community that, with regard to Kyrgyzstan, one should use the term "ethnic group" or "ethnic community," instead of "national minorities." Since that time, only these terms have been in use here. We have defended our position, and this suggests that we have harmony and elaboration of agreed decisions here. The use of these terms is justifiable; it's important for us what we should say and how we are called. When we use borrowed terms, we should always know what they really mean. The double meanings of some words bring about destruction because there are often undercurrents behind appearances. And then we cannot understand why this or that phenomenon took place. We were fighting for peace and came across war. We are talking about love, but violence is everywhere. Thank you.

Muratbek Imanaliev: Thank you very much for your speech. I just wanted to underline your thesis on diversity: Diversity in Unity. Biosocial basis of all of what we are speaking about, is, first of all, the fact that we are human beings.

Now I want to pass the word to Yusur Loma, an adviser to the Mufti of our country.

Yusur Loma: Hello, dear participants of the Roundtable. Let me welcome you and wish you all the benefits bestowed by the Almighty: productive work, mutual understanding and harmony in the discussion of today's problem. Also, I would like to thank Muratbek Sansyzybayevich for the opportunity to express here our vision in terms of the stated theme. I am a representative of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, so my speech will be largely based on Islam.

These problems are complex and rather delicate. Perhaps, it is the reason why it is necessary to exchange our views, observations and experiences. Yes, we are all different with our own customs, traditions, religions, languages, skin color. But therein lies our wealth as humanity, civilization, founded by the great Creator. One of the verses reads: "And let you form the community of those calling for good, calling for the approved and resistant to the repudiated" (Koran, from "The Family Imran", 104).

Having listened to Svetlana, you probably have understood that if we are doomed to live in a multiethnic, multi-religious society, such as Kyrgyzstan, we must learn to build a higher-level dialogue, prompted by existing realities, as the Creator advised: "... so ask the holders of knowledge, if you do not know yourselves" - "Prophets", 7; "Bees", 43.

We need joint efforts to use the full potential for creative processes, preservation and strengthening of spiritual and moral values of the society, the establishment of equilibrium, a balance, which are so needed now, rather than wasting our potential for destruction. We need dialogue and understanding, in order to value the existing world and consent and understand how they are fragile and require protection, as God said: "And help each other in piety ... but do not help one another in sin and enmity."



A balanced public policy should be implemented, which would contribute to the consolidation of the people of Kyrgyzstan, rather than divide it on religious and ethno-cultural grounds; it is also necessary to prevent sectarian strife and the spread of religious extremism; we should seek the achievement of interfaith and interethnic harmony. The state is an organization that unites all citizens, living on its territory, officially represents them, has responsibility for public security and order and must care about the welfare and protection of the rights and interests of people. The State, when defining its policy towards religion and religious organizations, should be guided by the principle of coexistence and cooperation of all faiths. In addition, it must take into account that Islam in the republic deeply penetrates into the national culture, and its elements appear everywhere. Mutually beneficial relations between the state and religious organizations will be established in the circumstances when the state legally determines the place of religion in society, specifies what it wants from religion, what is the freedom of religion and how to provide religious education.

As the researchers have noted, religion is undergoing the period of "renaissance." Yes, this is understandable: the change of formation, economic crises, terrorist attacks, natural and other disasters, force many people to turn to faith and seek explanation, reassurance and divine help; not relying on the mercy of people. Increasing needs for a deity created favorable conditions for the emergence of new beliefs in our region, new currents and cults, quite different from traditional ones.

The Golden Age of Islam, the era of the caliphate is the key period in the history of Muslim civilization. It was classic, really pure Islam. It should be noted that the caliphate was an open society. It accepted the achievements not only of the East but also of the West, seeking the broadest knowledge and fostering the diversity of arts and crafts. That what is missing in the contemporary Islam. The role of other denominations was significant in the creation of power and grandeur of the caliphate. They had a stimulating effect, which aroused competition. Probably, you have all heard of the Agreement of Medina, where Islam provided great opportunities for other denominations, in particular, the Orthodox Church. As argued by Konstantin Leontiev, a Russian writer and religious philosopher, when different types of ideologies, national and religious traditions are interacting, "flowering of cultures" is taking place, while monocultural societies are doomed to wilting. It was such "flowering of cultures" that gave to the world the Muslim caliphate - enlightened and tolerant, which united representatives of many nations and different religions.

The harmony of inter-religious relations, established by the caliphate, was violated by the European invasion. As Galina Emelyanova (PhD, University of Birmingham) said: "Islam as a faith, lifestyle and way of thinking, is very peaceful; do not confuse it with the use of Islamic slogans and symbols to solve political problems ... Pure Islam does not recognize differences by race or nationality. It unites people through common faith."

Radical organizations use Islam as a slogan and ideological base. They quite skillfully select and freely interpret the verses of the Koran, Hadith, which indicates their excellent knowledge of not only Islamic values but also the political, socio-economic situation of the country, as well as the psychology and mentality of the people, in order to attract supporters in achieving their goals.

I want to mention one curious fact. In the wake of perestroika and glasnost, the "Islamic Revival Party of USSR" was established in June 1990 in Astrakhan. Its founders formulated their goal: by constitutional methods to create for Soviet Muslims the conditions of realization of the "Islamic project," i.e., to give the opportunity to live in accordance with the teachings of the Koran and the Sunnah. Branches of the party emerged in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; its organizers sought to create similar structures in other countries. This project was not implemented. The Communist ideology was strong at that time, so this project could not be realized. According to the ideologists of communism, religion, in this case Islam, competed with their worldview. The proclaimed equality and fraternity, regardless of race and ethnicity, education and other attributes of democracy – are the elements of religious ideology, which has deep historical roots, uniting people on the basis of one faith, with its system and structure, which had been systematically destroyed. In this context, I would like to mention one prediction of A.I. Herzen, which is more than one hundred fifty years old: "Socialism will develop in all its phases to the extreme consequences, to absurdities. Then again a cry of denial will



break out of the titanic breast of the revolutionary minority, and another hard struggle will start, in which socialism will take the place of today's conservatism and will be defeated by the upcoming revolution, unknown to us.... " And, that really happened. So no other comments are necessary here.

I do not want to repeat, which term we should use in this case - tolerance or toleration. I think that we should talk about how to ensure inter-religious harmony and friendship. I often say that together with the other religions we must develop a code of honor, in order to avoid conflicts. I have nothing new to discover, it's been long known. I'm just trying to express my opinion.

An analysis of the situation shows that religious ideologues of different faiths, including the radical ones, actively attract more and more people, especially youth, skillfully using the information vacuum, poor knowledge of religion, social and economic difficulties, providing free humanitarian and financial assistance, sometimes facing the resistance of local population (which, in general, does not stop them). It is a common practice now, and you may recall, there have been some conflicts. There is a very tough struggle for the souls of parishioners. In this ideological struggle not only national civilization, but also the spiritual and religious values can disappear. Today, there are many philosophical notions which are far from the true values of Islam and the national mentality. And all this gets good financial support, which is the main factor against the background of our poverty, unemployment: loss of spiritual and moral values.

Today, we must seek the solution to the problem in the light of modern requirements, taking into account the national mentality, spiritual, moral and psychological condition and socio-economic development of the country. Without addressing the fundamentals of religion, in this case Islam, we must look at the problem from another angle, get rid of the old way of thinking; we must overcome the distrust. We should try to find other approaches and forms of dialogue, in order to be constructive and seek cooperation, instead of seeing religion as an enemy, or what is worse, to declare a "witch-hunt."

Concluding my speech, I would like to quote the words of an eminent physicist Kelvin: "If you think deeply and well, you will see that science makes you believe in God." The importance of this aspect was stressed by another famous thinker - Francis Bacon: "Superficial and ordinary philosophical knowledge leads people to atheism, while deep, full and comprehensive philosophical knowledge makes people pious." In this regard, I would like to quote another good thought by Francis Bacon: "Love for the motherland begins in the family." I would simply mention these problems, on which we must work: improving the education level, intellectual level, and the culture. Also, my colleagues say that we need to strengthen the family, where all the problems begin. The behavior of our children depends much on how we educate and socialise them. Strengthening the core unit of the society should be the main task. Thank you for your attention.

Muratbek Imanaliev: I totally agree with your last statement about the family. I am deeply convinced that the institution of the family should play a decisive role in inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and other social phenomena. Proselytism is a transitional phenomenon, and it is not an exclusive phenomenon in the CIS countries, it happens everywhere in the world.

Now I would like to give the word to Sergei Masaulov, the Director of the Institute of Strategic Analysis and Evaluation under the President of KR.

Sergei Masaulov: I fully agree with the recommendations of Yusur Yakubovich. I would say the following: The essence of tolerance is actually manifested in this room. Usually, when such questions are raised, hard collision and rebuttal take place. This is one of the qualities of our society; this is what distinguishes us from the others.

Trying to write on political tolerance in our country, I had to turn to practice. I set myself the task of writing seven theses on political tolerance, because in Asia "seven" is a sacred number. However, I have found only five theses that actually exist in our region.

The first thesis. I agree that **tolerance in the modern political practice means toleration**. I think



many experts would agree with that. This is not only ideological toleration, this is a kind of cordon, separating the organized society and the world of chaos. Tolerance helps us identify those phenomena that can be tolerated, and thus, it also helps us identify the other phenomena, which are dangerous for the society. For example, genocide or nationalist appeals heard from official leaders must not be tolerated. In this regard, tolerance is a kind of space, whose external boundary is in contact with what is called chaos. Its inner boundary is in contact with what is called the society. Borders of tolerance are just here.

There is a "no man's land" between the world of chaos and the world of normal society, it is a zone of phenomena, which could be conventionally tolerated. Those include, for example, everyday nationalism. This is a political phenomenon, and we are trying to tackle it. People treat it in different ways, and, from my point of view, they treat it very often, relying only on some abstractive ideas. In general, nationalism is the only political order, based on which it is possible to build independent Kyrgyzstan. Using nationalism as a certain set of ideas and values, we could quickly build an organized society. But out there, beyond this horizon, there is a problem associated with political sentiments and forebodings. It is preferable to be in the zone of toleration, because there are very different situations, which are life-threatening for a normal society. There is "cave" nationalism, when a person simply cannot see a stranger, and that's why he seeks to destroy this stranger. Tolerance is what allows us to focus on some aspect. Once again I would like to emphasize that in today's political reality, only reliance on nationalism, i.e., the reliance on the aggregate values of the nation, would help the country develop.

It is clear that there have always been the attempts to expand tolerance. Let's say, to make the expansion toward an organized society. Therefore, there is a third thesis. **There is a tendency (including in our country) of transformation of "zone of tolerance" into "society" and of "society" into "zone of tolerance."** I would like to cite an example, since I worked with this: in the West it has become a common practice when someone speaks bad about homosexuals, he/she can be immediately sued. However, the attacks against Christianity have become common, even in such a Catholic country like Italy. A recent decision of the European structures on the prohibition of official symbols of religion in educational institutions is explained by the fact that such symbols violate the rights of atheists. This is a sign: the symbol that reflects the millennial culture is rejected, because it offends some people. If we continue like that, Christianity can be brought to the level, similar to that one during the times of holocaust. But instead of the yellow star, they will use yellow cross and say that religious symbols offend others. It is alarming that the attack is undertaken against religion, an organized system of values, which has stood the test of time. I cannot say that we have the same situation in Kyrgyzstan, but the mechanism of transformation is clear.

It is important to introduce some norms for the society and to implement them. As Tatiana and Svetlana said, the rules, which have always existed in the Kyrgyz society, are being replaced today. When we begin to live in accordance with new norms, in a generation we will not even notice how everything will change. Since the mechanism is clear, I would draw your attention to the following. For us, this mechanism still works, whereas for the West it does not work anymore. Previously, powerful circles in the West, were forced to say goodbye to their old values and accept the existing values, and like that they could be incorporated into new society. Now the mechanism is different. These circles do not accept the norms of another society, they impose their own ones. So far, we do not have such situation. But this mechanism can come to our society as well, so we need to build a system of protection. In connection with this, here comes my fourth thesis: **Tolerance is no longer a protective sheath of society, it has become a source of alternative standards.** In this respect, tolerance assumes a repressive nature for some political movements, i.e., those who use the slogan of tolerance, in fact, exhibit strict (I stress - strict!) requirements for the society to recognize anyone, who is against them, an evil. For example, in this case our society should recognize "Hizb ut Tahrir" as a "right" movement, only because the terrorists also suffer, or have the right to their own point of view.

In a normally organized society tolerance, as a protective means, disappears. Instead, it becomes an attacking technique. The reason, from my point of view, lies in the fact that the "protective sheath" was created in the Soviet time, when the totalitarian ideology of toleration resisted the totalitarian



Soviet society. Tolerance was under the guise of totalitarian pressure on the Soviet society.

The concept of tolerance, rooted in the Soviet human rights underground movement, is still alive in the actions and statements of some NGOs in our country. Its essence is the *legitimation of any evil, if it is directed against the society*. Such a concept of toleration is an unaffordable luxury. Therefore, Kyrgyzstan should develop its own concept.

Fifth thesis: **the meaning of tolerance is reducing the number of entities, which can damage the society and state**. This we can recognize tolerant, because the number of these entities should be reduced. The problem is that the Kyrgyz statehood has not been completely formed. And we can not say that by removing the state we can preserve the Kyrgyz nation. In this regard, one of the core values - preservation of the people - requires preservation of a certain tool to protect the people and statehood. The zone of toleration should include those phenomena, which do not contradict the idea of preservation of Kyrgyz people and the state. Then, there is a kind of triad: preservation of the people, preservation of the state and stability of the society. These three things can form the zone of tolerance. All that is consistent with this rule may be accepted. All that works against it should be rejected.

Some minorities have the right to toleration, that is, i.e., to the legitimization of its existence, provided that its activity will remain at the level of private life.

The council of moral authorities performs the functions of determining the limits of tolerance in our society. The Kyrgyz have always highly esteemed moral authorities; however, as the study we are conducting now shows, those moral authorities are weak now. These include the clergy. In the present situation of our country, it should be mosque/church. But the mosque is not universally accepted, the authority of a secular institution should supplement the spiritual authority of the mosque. So, we have an idea to create a Kurultai (Convention) of Consent of the people who are an authority, who can influence both the level of generic relations, and the level of all other social relations. It is a convention of people who would consider the issues of public administration and the issues of inter-confessional relations, because it is the main thing. Proselytism has been mentioned today. How it would affect our society is also a big question. It is clear that the main issues of tolerance and intolerance must be considered.

That's all I can say about the political situation at the moment. Thank you.

Muratbek Imanaliev: Thank you very much, Sergei Ivanovich. All our speakers have made their presentations. They all were very useful. Now it is the time for questions.

Tolkun Bekbulatova: I have a question for Sergei Masaulov. You said that nation-building is a way of survival for Kyrgyzstan. Lately, a lot of experts have spoken of the civil nation; that in Kyrgyzstan, there should be a civil nation which would form the basis of the state. My question is: are there pre-conditions for the formation of the civil nation in Kyrgyzstan at the moment, and if so, what are they?

The second question is for Tatiana Vygovskaya. We have talked, for the most part, about tolerance, about phenomena that are associated with tolerance, with the fundamentals of large group identities, associated either with religion or with ethnicity. Why don't we say that tolerance is a big social phenomenon? We can argue in the semantic field quite a long time, but why don't we talk about tolerance, based on such group identifications, as the rich and the poor, or on professional grounds? Is that because we do not have these problems, or is it not so important? Perhaps, there are some different levels of group identification, which somehow are consistent, adhering intolerance of tolerance?

Tatiana Vygovskaya: Thank you for your question. First and foremost, I want to speak about the stereotype of tolerance, which exists in our society. The fact is, when we talk about tolerance, we separate it from reality. This is a common problem, no matter what we are talking about, whether it is ethnic, religious or political tolerance. Today, Sergei Ivanovich provided us concrete definition. This is the first specific sufficient statement on political tolerance I've heard.



We are accustomed to attributing tolerance to the sphere of the unattainable and desirable. When we talk about tolerance, we do not specify where this tolerance is. Perhaps, tolerance is in my personal attitude: whom I tolerate, what is the extent of my toleration, where is the limit of my tolerance? We recognize tolerance as an ideal, which we should seek. But we do not ask ourselves, "Why?" Of course, the questions of tolerance between the poor and the wealthy, the wise and the foolish, are never discussed here. Why? Because we have certain social stereotypes. The poor are miserable here, and the rich are bad. Where is tolerance? It is nowhere, because the poor treat the rich with no tolerance, so the rich for some reason must be tolerant toward the poor. This is not a question of tolerance; this is a question of toleration. This is a question of balance of relations; the balance of rights.

There should be some limit for tolerance. We believe that discussion of the issues of the rich and the poor, the foolish and the wise, the issues that affect the tolerance of an individual - is taboo; we cannot do it. When discussing this question, we must speak about some nonexistent ideal.

It is my opinion, as I am a practitioner in this area, we are working with local communities, with the people who did not know the term "proselytism" or others. They have only eight grades of education. But they represent the people. They are the majority. They are tolerant or intolerant at that level of purely domestic identification, not ethnic or religious identification. We will not achieve tolerance, or the culture of tolerance in Kyrgyz society, in Kyrgyzstan, or in Central Asia, unless we learn to see reality. Tolerance is not a myth, but today's reality.

Sergei Masaulov: I expected this question, because I have been often asked lately. Tolerance refers to the level of principles, not of procedures or personal relationships. They say, "Be healthy, live wealthy." Do you know what "wealthy" means? It means, "May you have many children." It does not mean money.

Regarding the nation, it is a very important question, because, by and large, our project is aimed at the formation of the nation. The speech of the President on January 27, was provocative. This was an appeal to the nation. It caused a controversial reaction because everyone understood in his own way, which nation the President had addressed. But the discussion itself showed that almost all people who live in Kyrgyzstan perceive themselves as citizens of this country. From our point of view, when we are working with this as with a project, we say: no matter on what grounds, it is important that people must find their place in this country. And then it is a civil nation. This is the main message: it is important that all are in their places and do their proper business. In this regard, I would like to say that diversity in the country is the basis of formation of the nation. Here, I completely agree with the previous speaker. We can benefit from similar qualities, and we have plenty of them. This is the guarantee that the nation can be built. And one more thing, there is a real program and project for the formation of the Kyrgyz nation.

Muratbek Imanaliev: Tolerance is a set of relations, in my opinion. I'm talking about one of the contexts, provoking dynamics in a person in the physical and spiritual sense. Why does an American, seeing that his neighbor bought a new house, seek to buy a better house? And why does a person in our country, seeing that his neighbor bought or built a new house, try to burn it? This problem is quite complicated, so tolerance is a very complex process, which we do not fully understand.

More questions? If there are no questions, I would like to thank all the speakers once again for the interesting presentations. Now we can listen to the comments of those present.

Roundtable Participant: I want to return to the institutions of tolerance, to the point that the state should control tolerance. When the state was formed, it assumed a lot of responsibilities, while the population had very few responsibilities towards the State. We can say there are only two of them: to pay taxes and serve in the army. Our population is trying to avoid both. Moreover, those who are largely incompetent, try to advise the State on how everything should work. We forget about the Constitution and that people have delegated many functions to the state. Therefore, the state must protect itself, and in order to do that, it must control some ideological values of society. As far as I



understood, this Kurultai is needed only to ensure that these values are clearly defined and supported?

Sergei Masaulov: They must be fixed and respected. I want to answer the question. In our country, there are many actors who work with tolerance. But I would like to draw your attention to the following. Before 2009, there was no single project in the national form. Tolerance is both a national project and a public project. The State may create fundamental conditions for the functioning of various associations, which cannot agree with each other and build an idea of what is tolerance. By and large, I can not say anything else. If there is an inter-religious council, it will decide what is tolerance in these respects. We generally think that we may be the first in the CIS to pass the route from administrative to communicative authority; when different groups of people will be willing and able to address the various socially relevant issues. The state in this respect only plays a role of a certain instrument, which can be used to fix this border, to respect and protect an organized society from external influence.

Yusur Loma: I was surprised to learn that in Russia, there is no public authority on the problem of religion. There exist an inter-religious council and a council of interaction with religious organizations under the President of RF. And that is a big country. I would also add that recently, in Moscow, there was a meeting of the Moscow City Council. Thirty-five deputies were elected as representatives of fifteen million people – such a representation.

We are talking about some boundaries, some rules. I always think, who develops these standards, and what are the limits of tolerance? We say that there is a limit, but who can determine this limit? On the domestic level, there are many things that we do not even think about. This is, for example, everyday nationalism; it does exist. If you do not know, ask the people. Where is the boundary of tolerance, and how can we define it? It is a very complex issue. In religion, we say that we must tolerate each other. There must be some sort of agreement, we are not talking about superiority of one religion over another, because it immediately leads to conflicts. We always say that we need to identify common points in order to raise nation-wide problems. Security, as it should be. There is an ideological level of security. Nowadays, we talk a lot about ideological programs, but the problem is still vague. In America, there have always been different racial group. But when they are raising the American flag, tears appear in the eyes of everyone. I marvel at this. When we ask who they are, the answer is always the same: Americans. If you ask an American about faith, he does not say right away what religion he belongs to. He simply says, "I am a believer." Therefore, we should organize institutions and work out something. The older generation, probably, remembers the moral code of the builders of communism with clearly formulated principles. In this case, are we going to replace tolerance with some codes or seven commandments of Manas? I want to say that we should be closer to today's realities and produce something attainable. We should not seek some ideal solution, which is hard to implement; we must spring from realities that exist today.

Unfortunately, many of our brothers chose faith as a primary criterion. And there are conflicts because of that. In the Naryn region there are two Baptists, and if one of them dies, how should people bury him? It is a problem. Disputes arise, and they must be settled somehow. A man dies and must be buried, but the Muslim cemetery does not allow it. Where can they carry his body to? Five hundred kilometers away, where he can be buried?

Ishenbai Abdurazakov: You asked a provocative question. In Islam, there is a remarkable provision: there is no compulsion in religion. You can become a Muslim, or you can stop being a Muslim. I was always amazed: why, when a man of another religion dies, the local Muslim community rejects his elementary right to be buried? Maybe, he had converted to Islam right before his death, how could they know it? Why did we let it go that far?

Yusur Loma: First of all, we must take into account the educational and intellectual level of our people. This question has always been difficult. In the Naryn oblast, the local population is isolated enough; it has never seen the people of other faiths. Therefore, such people are met with hostility. According to Islam, if a person converted to Islam, three or four other Muslims must attest this.



Ishenbai Abdurazakov: What if no one was there, when a person became Muslim?

Yusur Loma: It is possible, only in very rare exceptions. This is very complicated. Therefore, we are talking about the governmental policy of religion; it must be stated clearly. There are problems, which are very difficult to solve, and the Inter-religious Council must solve them. This council aims at developing common standards for all faiths, without affecting the fundamentals of the religion.

Lira Karagulova: I am glad to see my colleagues, with whom we have been working on this problem for over ten years. I would like to comment on the remarks of our colleagues. Haven't you happened to think that tolerance has both internal and external sides? The internal side is how a man perceives himself as a person. The internal side is very important. This topic requires another round table to make it clear; how tolerance is perceived by our youth. Svetlana talked about the definition from the dictionary of Ozhegov – that is patience, toleration. We argue with this because we are at the stage when tolerance is not understood as toleration, we go deeper. These concepts, these actions, which we have taken, require a framework, as Sergei Masaulov said. There must be boundaries; some institutions must be set up. I want to say that the tolerance of our society is an indicator of what our civil society is; how it looks like. Now, it is very difficult to say what the situation in civil society is. Are we tolerant? We immediately begin to think whether we are tolerant toward one nation or another. I would like to say that tolerance is education, it is a culture, it is when a person respects himself or herself as an individual, it is self-expression, and it is when citizens of the society know their rights.

A very interesting idea has been said today that everything is formed in the family, and then transmitted into kindergartens, schools and institutes. Of course, the family matters. We are right when we say that the ethno-pedagogy plays an important role in educating children. But we do not know how to show all the good that we have. We are trying to talk about problems all the time. I would not treat tolerance as a problem. Maybe I'm wrong. I have worked for ten years on this issue and on other problems of our civil society. We find some way out. So, I would not say that tolerance is a big problem in our society.

Ishenbai Abdurazakov: Honestly, I did not intend to speak on this theme. But I have some spontaneous thoughts. Usually, tolerance is used in the conflicts between civilizations; cross-cultural relations. But now we consider a large range of issues. Here we have changed the context, and therefore, we have changed the semantics of the word "tolerance." Therefore, I understand tolerance like this: it does not necessarily mean agreement with someone's opinion. I would rather say that it is the recognition of the fact that there is another view, which is different from mine – different from my approach. It is an understanding of the necessity to develop something of value for social development and the government. However, the achievement of these goals, the achievement of some of the latest values, meeting the requirements of our time, is an extremely difficult task.

Today, Yusur talked about the caliphate. Yes, there was a period of revival, a kind of cultural renaissance. But for some reason, this culture withered, and the Christian culture took its place. After all, in the Middle Ages, the Christian culture was also in decline. There is no critical approach to those issues.

There is a melting pot, and it is long-playing. So we must not measure it by some deadline. It is formed throughout thousands of years. Now there are many problems that we must deal with – not as ethnic Kyrgyz, but as citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic. Here, our tolerance should be manifested in the fact that, recognizing diversity, we must, together, seek the ways that will ensure equality and freedom for all citizens. And here, haste is very dangerous. Therefore, tolerance is a very sensible approach to reality in order to avoid conflicts. If we follow the path of stability, given the different approaches and making general conclusions – this is tolerance. We must not rush, we must weigh all the pros and cons. Then, we will be able to achieve something. Thank you.

Muratbek Imanaliev: I think that is a worthwhile and optimistic end of our Roundtable.