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Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues at its third session, on minorities and effective participation in economic life (14 and 15 December 2010)

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I. Introduction

1. Given the pivotal nature of economic rights to the full inclusion of minority communities, at its third session, the Forum on Minority Issues focused on the topic of minorities and effective participation in economic life. The Chairperson of the Forum was Professor Gita Sen. The work of the Forum was guided by the independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall. The participants, of whom there were more than 500, included representatives of Governments, treaty bodies, United Nations specialized agencies, regional intergovernmental bodies and civil society. Importantly, the participants included representatives of minority communities from all regions of the world.

2. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 6/15 and also with reference to resolution 13/12 (para. 3), the Forum made thematic recommendations that seek to be action-oriented and of practical value to all stakeholders, to enable them to make informed choices when designing legislation and policies aimed at combating the economic exclusion of minority communities.

3. The recommendations are based on international human rights norms. In addition to the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities and the clarifications provided in the commentary thereto, the recommendations draw upon other relevant international human rights standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the jurisprudence and general comments of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO).¹

4. The range of issues included in the recommendations is not exhaustive. They should be interpreted in a generous spirit in cooperation with the communities and with a view to the effective application of human rights instruments and standards in practice, so that they can make a real difference in the lives of persons belonging to minorities.

II. General considerations

5. Economic exclusion is a cause, a manifestation and a consequence of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities. Many minorities have historically been excluded from full and effective participation in economic life, both in the developed and in the developing world. Minorities are often discriminated against when they seek employment, on the basis of their colour, ethnicity, race, religion, language or name, even when there is legislation that bans discrimination in both public and private sectors. Some face long-

¹ See, for example, Human Rights Committee general comment No. 23 (1994) on the rights of minorities; Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination general recommendations No. 27 (2000) on discrimination against Roma, No. 29 on article 1, paragraph 1 (descent), and No. 32 (2009) on the meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women general recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers (2008); and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has established an early warning and early action procedure to address serious violations of the Convention in an urgent manner. See also the supervisory work of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations and the ILO global reports on discrimination under the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).

standing and entrenched challenges, such as discrimination on the basis of work and descent, including caste and analogous forms of bias, which require specific attention. Women shoulder even more complex burdens of poverty, ethnic prejudice and gender-based restrictions.

6. Undue legal restrictions on the practice of traditional livelihoods and other economic activities of minorities still exist in some countries. They may face barriers in their access to credit or loans for businesses or may live in the poorest or most remote regions where governments have taken fewer measures to provide for economic and social development opportunities. Equally, large-scale economic development projects or commercial activities carried out on the lands and territories where minorities live, without prior consultation with these minorities, have had negative outcomes, including forced displacement, the perpetuation of poverty and, in some cases, violence, including sexual violence.

7. The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992 states that persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in economic and public life (art. 2, para. 2). It also states that ensuring that persons belonging to minorities are “an integral part of the development of society as a whole” is necessary to maintain or build harmonious and respectful relations within society (sixth preambular paragraph). The Declaration highlights the fact that States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country (art. 4, para. 5). The specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system are to contribute to these goals within their respective fields of competence (art. 9).

8. Several factors can exacerbate the exclusion of minorities, including deteriorating economic conditions, ethnic, religious, cultural or sectarian tensions or discrimination. In many countries, minorities do not enjoy their economic and social rights fully owing to unequal regional distribution of resources and services and a lack of investments and basic infrastructure in regions where minorities live. The numerical disadvantage of minority status can also translate into lack of political power and exclusion from effective participation in governance to protect rights or in access to mechanisms of justice when rights are violated.

9. The past decade has also brought new and unanticipated challenges, including the global food and economic crises, and climate change. These have had a significant impact on global governance and, in particular, on the vulnerability of minorities. Times of economic crisis can present particular challenges to minorities, which may be already subject to societal discrimination and stigma. Social pressures to blame those who have the least power can become explosive unless Governments play a moderating role and guarantee protection from violence and abuse. At the same time, policy measures to eradicate poverty are being compromised by the impact of the economic crisis and the constraints on international development assistance.

10. The effects of environmental degradation and climate change, including on access to food, water, habitats and livelihoods, are having a significant and disproportionate impact on minority groups. Climate change may threaten the very existence of minorities living in vulnerable environments. Insufficient attention to collecting accurate information about these consequences for minorities can render counteracting measures weak and inadequate.

11. Effective participation of minorities in economic life requires the creation of an enabling environment in the social, legal and political spheres, promoting respect for and the protection and fulfilment of the rights of minorities. The full implementation of the recommendations made by the Forum on Minority Issues, at its two previous sessions, on education and on the political participation of minorities are key elements in ensuring that minorities are protected and empowered to exercise effective participation in all areas of

economic life. Representatives of minority communities, including women, and traditional leadership institutions should be engaged in a meaningful participatory process in all aspects of the implementation of the recommendations.

12. Strategies for the inclusion of minorities in economic life should take into account the diversity of situation, identity and interests of minority groups. Different minority groups within a given country can have varying degrees of economic participation and diverse goals for economic inclusion, differentiated further by factors such as age and gender. In some minority groups, mainstream economic activities may be considered incompatible with or harmful to their livelihoods, cultural life and the exercise of their rights. Governments and other actors should be respectful of alternative forms of economic life and different development priorities expressed by minority groups, recognizing that such accommodation is integral to the protection of minority rights and the development of society as a whole.

13. Particular attention should be given to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against minorities, including on the basis of sex, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Intersectional discrimination deepens and complicates the impact of the denial of access to jobs, housing and other economic rights, making it more difficult to identify sustainable solutions. Minority women in rural or remote areas in some countries must cope with a profound isolation created by boundaries of the home, lack of education and language barriers. Their workload is made heavier by the lack of basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation, cheap and clean cooking fuels, the availability of child-care support, and protection against domestic and societal violence. Entrenched gender roles leave women highly vulnerable, particularly with regard to ownership of land or property, inheritance rights and access to credit, technology or markets.

14. Increasingly informal labour markets, a result of globalization, have brought more women into paid work, but often with low pay and under poor working conditions. This renders the conditions under which minority women - and all too often young girls - earn incomes difficult, harmful or even dangerous.

15. The right of minorities to participate effectively in economic life must be taken fully into account by Governments in all policy initiatives. From implementing non-discrimination in employment and enforcing protection laws in the private sector to developing national economic development and international development assistance schemes, Governments face the constant challenge of ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected and that they benefit as equal members of society. Development agencies, financial institutions and other actors involved in international cooperation share this challenge and should ensure that minority rights are protected fully in their response to the current global financial and employment crisis.

III. Recommendations

A. Governments

16. **Governments should eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination affecting participation in economic life for minorities. Measures must be taken to eliminate discrimination against minorities in both the public and private sectors, including in the key fields of employment and labour rights, financial services, education and training, productivity-enhancing technologies, social security, land tenure and property rights. Governments should recognize and address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against minorities, including on the basis of sex, age, sexual**

orientation and gender identity or disability and their compounded negative impact on the women and other groups concerned.

17. Governments should ensure sufficient allocation of resources to implement fully domestic and international standards on non-discrimination. This includes sufficient resources for the development of indicators and benchmarks and for the regular monitoring of direct and indirect discrimination in access to economic and social rights.

18. Governments should ensure that there are strong penalties that are rigorously enforced for violation of laws on non-discrimination. Conversely, incentives for compliance and good practice should be meaningful. Guidelines and examples of positives practices should be easily accessible. Complaints mechanisms and remedies for violations of the right to non-discrimination by public and private sector actors and institutions should be equally accessible to persons belonging to minorities. Legal aid schemes targeting minority groups should be provided to ensure protection of their rights and access to justice.

19. Public sector employees should be provided with training on non-discrimination and cultural awareness in delivery of Government services. Access by minorities to Government services can be improved, for example, through the provision of services in minority languages, active outreach to minority communities, and branch offices in regions where minorities predominantly live.

20. Governments should gather, analyse and regularly publish disaggregated data to measure and monitor the effective participation of minorities in economic life. Improved data collection should be made a priority with regard to employment and labour rights, poverty rates, access to social services, social security, credit and other financial services, education, vocational training and land tenure rights. Data should be benchmarked and disaggregated by, inter alia, ethnicity, language and religion, and cross-tabulated by sex, age, disability and urban-rural and/or geographical residence.

21. Data should be gathered in a manner that is consistent with the right of minorities to self-identification, using transparent methodology that is consistent with international standards on privacy protections including, inter alia, informed consent and adherence to ethical standards. The participation of minorities should be ensured in all aspects of design of methodology and collection of data. The legislative framework must provide for an effective data protection system to ensure that data are not misused to violate the rights of minorities, especially of rights to safety and freedom from violence. In this regard, better international standards and guidance for data protection should be developed.

22. Governments should value and protect the pursuit of traditional livelihood practices by minority groups. Such practices frequently add value to the wider economy but may face threats from environmental change, economic crisis or undue restrictions on activities. Pastoralists, for example, should have special protection measures for access to pasture and water; regional development initiatives could enable transborder economic activity. Governments should develop legislation and policies to promote the sustainability and welfare of pastoralist ways of life and include pastoralists, particularly women, in the development of such policies. Traditional craft industries could be afforded better market access through technology and infrastructure support. Fisher peoples should participate in policy decisions on the conservation of fish stocks and the protection of coastal regions and rivers.

23. Environmental degradation has a particularly harsh impact on pastoralists and fisher peoples. Governments should strictly enforce environmental protection laws in regions where minorities live. Localized adaptation and mitigation strategies should be put in place in cooperation with minority groups in response to climate change.

24. Governments should review, with the full and effective participation of minority groups, the extent to which minorities have equal access to land and security of land and property rights. Land owned or occupied by minorities may be highly valued for industrial growth or urban development because of its minerals, resources or location. Development projects, including the construction of dams, may have a negative impact on the use of land owned or occupied by minorities. This can create significant threats to minorities who lack the political or legal means to challenge land theft, forced displacement, involuntary resettlement or the harmful impact of extractive industries.

25. Strategies for improving security of land rights for minorities must be based on the principle of free, prior and informed consent to actions that would have an impact on the rights of minorities. Strategies can include a programme of land titling, review and, where necessary, revisions of domestic laws on land tenure, and fair and transparent resolution of land and property rights cases in domestic courts. Particular attention should be paid to land and property rights of women belonging to minorities, including equality in inheritance rights. Systems of shared or collective land rights and customary land tenure and property rights should be recognized and protected within the national legal system.

26. Governments must provide adequate and equitable compensation options for land and other forms of property, including full restitution and equity shares for land acquisition, in consultation with affected minorities or their freely chosen representatives. In cases in which minorities have lost land rights owing to theft or deceit, forced displacement or eviction, measures should be taken to ensure that they have the possibility to assert claims to these lands, or to gaining access to agreed upon equivalent land elsewhere. In post-conflict or post-displacement situations, processes for land and property restitution should be established and implemented.

27. Persons belonging to minorities are often not able to obtain full and equal access to social protections and security. Minorities are more likely to work in the informal economy, where contributions to social security schemes are unlikely. Governments should take steps to ensure that minorities are aware of their rights and how to have access to them. Cash transfer schemes and related social protection measures should be adapted to take account of vulnerabilities and risks due to discrimination based on minority identity. Social security programmes should be accessible to workers in the informal economy. Where access to social protection measures are contingent on identity cards, special measures should be taken to accommodate minorities who often face barriers to obtaining identity cards and birth registration created by prejudice.

28. Education is a key aspect of improving the economic participation of minorities. Governments should ensure that persons belonging to minorities have equal access to quality education leading to equal educational outcomes. Education should comply with international standards on the right to education for minorities, including mother-tongue education, curriculum reform, teacher training and investment in educational facilities used by minorities.² Governments are encouraged

² See A/HRC/FMI/2008/2.

to collect data on educational attainment levels of minorities and to identify key barriers to higher educational attainment. Programmes to overcome these barriers may include targeted support for children at risk, targeted grants and scholarships for primary, secondary and higher education, school support and outreach to families, and community cooperation initiatives with minority communities and organizations. Such programmes should pay special attention to social and cultural barriers based on gender and, in particular, must ensure personal safety, including protection from sexual abuse, and the right to water and sanitation facilities for adolescent girls.

29. Governments should invest in programmes that build employable skills for minorities, particularly women, who are often excluded from the labour market or at higher risk of unemployment. This could include the development of traineeships targeted for minorities; the provision of adult education, in areas where minorities live, that would include vocational training and qualifications for higher-skilled sectors; targeted scholarships and research fellowships for higher education; and free access to language and literacy training. Ensuring equal access to new technologies for minorities, including in the energy and information communications technology sectors, can counteract growing inequality gaps and increase the productive skills capacity of minorities.

30. Governments should invest in legislative and policy reform to ensure access to productive and decent work and the protection of labour rights for persons belonging to minorities. Governments should consider the establishment of a national task force, in which minorities participate, to review and devise strategies for improving employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for minorities. Minorities often live in regions where job opportunities are fewer and infrastructure for markets is weaker. In consultation with minority communities, Governments should consider creating incentives for private sector enterprise in such areas, including improvements to infrastructure facilities, tax incentives and Government-supported traineeship schemes targeted for minorities. This can be coupled with investment in public sector employment in these regions.

31. Governments should take all necessary steps to overcome barriers to minority women's access to the labour market, including lack of professional education and formal qualifications, limited knowledge of the official language, low awareness of job opportunities, geographical location of jobs distant from the place of residence, lack of public infrastructure for childcare and financial difficulties. Cultural traditions may further discourage minority women's involvement in employment. Minority women workers should be protected from mental, physical and sexual abuse by employers. Gender-based discrimination in hiring, promotion and pay must be eliminated. Programmes should be established to provide maternity leave, access to childcare facilities and special protection at work during pregnancy with respect to potentially harmful activities.

32. Labour inspection services should be reviewed and increased where necessary in regions and for occupations where there is a large minority presence. Access to existing complaints mechanisms for employment discrimination should be reviewed to ensure that minority members can effectively make complaints, and that the mechanisms are free, accessible and rapid.

33. Minorities are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage, low-skilled labour, including in the key informal economy sectors of domestic work, agricultural labour and street vending. Governments are urged to adopt and implement national legislation and policies that would extend protection of labour laws and social security to individuals working in the informal economy in both urban and rural areas. This could include support for workers' organizations and participation of representatives

from these sectors in planning and policy committees of government. Domestic workers, the majority of whom are women, would benefit from efforts by ILO to establish new international standards for domestic workers, and Governments are urged to ratify swiftly an expected international convention to this end.³ Street vendors should benefit from legislative and practical protection against harassment and changes in urban planning to provide safe and productive zones for the delivery of their services. National labour legislation in economic sectors where there is a large presence of minorities, such as agricultural labour, should be reviewed and strengthened to ensure equal protection to that afforded workers in other industries in which there is a predominance of majority populations.

34. Many persons belonging to minorities are self-employed in small businesses. Governments should ensure that such businesses have equal protection before the law. Business support agencies or business-related policy reforms should take steps to ensure equal access for minority business owners and accommodation of cultural or religious particularities. Governments should ensure that the impact on minority businesses of the financial crisis and of fiscal, monetary or other policies to address the crisis are monitored, and that steps are taken to ensure that such businesses are not disproportionately harmed. Businesses in the informal economy, where many minority businesses are concentrated, should have access to simplified licensing or registration procedures to bring them fairly and without discrimination into formal sector protections and social securities. Financial services, including credit services, should be monitored to ensure non-discriminatory access to such services by minorities. Special measures should be taken to ensure access by minority women to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit. Where applicable, culturally or religiously appropriate lending practices should be encouraged.

35. Regulatory agencies overseeing the financial services industries should review practices by banks and similar financial institutions to ensure that these institutions comply with standards on non-discrimination in access to credit and financial services.

36. Governments are urged to review legal and regulatory provisions regarding migrant workers, as well as the practices of law enforcement agents and employers, to ensure complete conformity with minority rights and the rights on non-citizens under the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Migrant workers belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups should be enabled to exercise their right to practice their culture, language and religion in community with other members of their group and should be protected from discrimination in all relevant domestic legislation. Access to basic social services, education and labour rights, including social security, should be provided for all migrant workers and their families in accordance with international standards. Women migrant workers may be especially vulnerable to maltreatment in the form of non-payment of wages and, in some cases, mental, physical and sexual abuse.

37. Governments should take special measures to address disparities with regard to the participation of minorities in economic life, including the effects of direct and indirect discrimination. Robust programmes should be undertaken, especially in the fields of employment, education and training, political representation, financial

³ ILO is working towards the adoption in June 2011 of a new international standard on domestic workers.

services, land tenure and property rights and/or social security.⁴ Affirmative action measures should be a component of a comprehensive equality strategy and may cover a broad spectrum of tools, policies and practices, from benchmarks and quotas to targeted recruitment, hiring and promotion, and may include legislative reform or targeted budgetary support. Decisions on policy choices should be made in meaningful consultation with minority groups, be transparent and be supported by disaggregated data demonstrating existing inequalities.

38. Persons belonging to minorities who experience intersecting discrimination may require additional measures to ensure that they have equal access to their right to non-discrimination and remedies in cases of violations. Such measures should be responsive to the fact that girls and women usually bear multiple work burdens, within and outside the home, that require amelioration and support. Additionally, age and disability impose special vulnerabilities that commonly result in poorer economic status.

39. The right of minorities to be informed of and participate in the elaboration of macroeconomic and social policy at the national level and in local level economic and social policy decision-making should be guaranteed, including participation in relevant standing committees and ad hoc consultative mechanisms. These are, however, no substitute for formal representation in governance structures. Governments should conduct human rights impact assessments for proposed economic and social policy reforms to ensure that there is no direct or indirect discrimination against minorities or other violations of minority rights. Budgetary allocations by sector and region should address inequalities experienced by minorities, including minority women in those sectors and regions. Information on budgetary allocations should be transparent and accessible to minority groups, including through the publication of budgets in minority languages and coverage in minority media outlets.

40. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is critical to securing the full and effective participation of minorities in economic life. There is, however, a risk that minorities will be excluded from or harmed by policies linked to the Goals.⁵ Governments are encouraged to establish new Millennium Development Goals Plus indicators for those targets that minorities are at particular risk of not achieving. National poverty action plans and, where applicable, the implementation of poverty reduction strategy papers should be pursued with the full and effective participation of minorities to ensure that essential principles for poverty reduction such as accountability, equality, non-discrimination, participation and empowerment are fully achieved. Indicators to measure poverty should take into consideration the cultures and lifestyles of minorities in order to assess poverty from the perspective of the community's aspirations rather than only those of dominant groups.

41. Governments should support the establishment of a voluntary fund for minorities (see paragraph 64 below).

⁴ See general recommendation 32 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

⁵ See also the report of the independent expert on the Millennium Development Goals and minorities (A/HRC/4/9/Add.1).

B. National human rights institutions

42. National human rights institutions should review the implementation of domestic legislation on discrimination in access to employment, labour rights, health and other social services, social security, financial services, land and property rights, education and training. They should make recommendations that respond to gaps in implementation or legislation.

43. National institutions should focus particular attention on the performance of Government services with regard to non-discrimination and equality measures in civil service employment. Data should be gathered and published annually.

C. Civil society

44. Civil society actors focused on key aspects of economic participation should cooperate closely with minority groups that prioritize these issues in their advocacy to strengthen civil society initiatives and ensure that proposed reform measures fulfil the rights of minorities and are not harmful. Civil society organizations should form coalitions and networks to strengthen national, regional and international advocacy on the protection of minority rights and should widely disseminate the recommendations of the Forum.

45. Civil society organizations are encouraged to form coalitions or networks to strengthen national, regional and international advocacy on the protection of minority rights. Particular attention should be paid to providing legal counselling, advice and, where necessary, representation in legal proceedings to help secure economic and social rights for minorities.

46. Civil society efforts at budget monitoring should integrate attention to minority rights into monitoring activities. To improve the economic participation of minorities, special attention should be paid to monitoring the equity of budget allocations in regions where there are significant minority populations and to special measures or other policy initiatives that address discrimination against minorities in access to education and training, employment, financial services, social security and land tenure and property rights.

47. Civil society initiatives relating to businesses and corporate social responsibility should integrate attention to minority rights issues into their campaigns, into dialogues with private sector actors and into recommended legislative and policy reforms. Particular attention should be paid to eradicating discrimination in access to work and labour rights, and to preventing corporate exploitation of minority lands, resources, cultures and traditional knowledge.

D. Trade unions

48. Trade unions should recruit and be supportive of minority workers, including tackling the problems of minorities in the labour force. They should extend their efforts to economic sectors where minorities are often found. Negotiation of collective agreements should systematically take minority interests into account.

49. Trade unions should extend institutional, legal and advocacy support to informal economy workers where minority groups may be concentrated, including to domestic workers, agricultural labourers and street vendors. Efforts can be made to enable workers in these sectors and all other relevant sectors to establish

representative networks or organizations, including with the support of meeting space, legal advice, start-up funds or advice on institution-building.

50. Trade unions should ensure the full, effective and equal participation of minority union members in leadership and decision-making structures of the union. They should ensure that information on trade union activities is accessible to minorities, including through translation into relevant minority languages or outreach to minority media outlets.

51. Trade unions should survey union members to identify issues of discrimination on the basis of minority identity, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, that have affected equal access to employment and labour rights. Trade unions should establish task forces to develop plans of action to eradicate labour practices that discriminate against minorities.

E. Private business sector, including national and transnational corporations

52. All business enterprises should ensure that their operations comply with national and international labour standards. Employers should ensure that persons from minority groups have access to their labour rights without discrimination, including in the areas of hiring, remuneration, promotion, the right to join and form trade unions and to take part in their activities, access to employment tribunals, maternity leave, childcare and pensions.

53. Employers should aim for a workforce that reflects the ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity of the national or local population. Job vacancies should be advertised in local minority media outlets and recruitment drives should reach out to local community organizations. Companies also should adopt affirmative programmes and special retention initiatives, and consider the creation of designated traineeships for persons belonging to minorities. Businesses should train employees on non-discrimination, minority rights and cultural awareness and, where appropriate, offer services in minority languages. The appointment of data protection officers should be encouraged.

54. Initiatives on corporate social responsibility should integrate attention to minority rights in their monitoring, accountability and capacity-building activities. Such initiatives should aim at having a real impact on the enjoyment of human rights of minorities and be evaluated in accordance with this goal. In particular, high standards of due diligence should be maintained to prevent and eliminate any negative effects of corporate activities on the lands, resources, traditional knowledge, culture and beliefs of minority groups.

55. Business associations should work with minority businesses and minority business associations to safeguard their equal protection before the law and under relevant regulatory frameworks. Minorities could consider the establishment of minority business associations to facilitate the promotion of minority businesses and protection of minority rights in the domestic legal and regulatory framework directed at business and enterprise.

F. International financial institutions: International Monetary Fund, World Bank and regional development banks

56. International financial institutions should ensure that their financial lending and technical cooperation does not result in direct or indirect discrimination against minority groups or violations of other minority rights. Impact assessments of proposed macroeconomic, financial and structural reforms and funding of large-scale Government projects should include attention to the situation of minorities and recommendations for respecting, protecting and fulfilling their rights, including safeguarding their livelihoods and securing their land, property and resources. International financial institutions should urge Governments to take steps to mitigate the effects of the global economic crisis on minorities and to protect minority rights during periods of increased vulnerability.

57. International financial institutions should ensure that programme support initiatives on poverty eradication and social inclusion take full account of and respond to barriers to participation in economic life experienced by minority groups. In-house systems for reviewing strategic plans, lending and country programmes from the perspective of minority rights protection should be established with the effective participation of minority groups. International financial institutions are encouraged to adopt safeguard policies and complaints mechanisms that are easily accessible to minorities. Information on the activities of international financial institutions should be made available to minorities, including through proactive outreach to minority communities, minority media outlets and translation of relevant documents. International financial institutions should promote hiring policies that foster the active recruitment and retention of minority workers.

58. International financial institutions are urged to invest in research to analyse the participation of minorities in economic life. Particular attention could be given to measuring the impact on domestic economic growth of minority exclusion from labour markets and private enterprise, and analysing the impact of economic crises on minorities and approaches to accommodating different development priorities expressed by minority groups.

59. Bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements should not restrict the ability of Governments to adopt affirmative action and other special measures aimed at ensuring non-discrimination and full participation of minorities in economic life. The ability of Governments to use a combination of trade and investment policy tools necessary for them to promote the full participation of minorities in their economies should be supported. Market access by minorities should be monitored to ensure non-discrimination and the adoption of special measures where necessary. The impact of trade policies on minorities should be monitored.

G. United Nations agencies and other bilateral and multilateral development agencies

60. Development agencies should work closely with Governments to identify and remedy the root causes of discrimination against minorities that result in economic and social exclusion. All country strategies should reflect mainstreaming of minority issues and minority rights. Consideration should also be given to the effects of intersecting forms of discrimination in all strategies. To this end, development agencies should facilitate the full, effective and meaningful participation of representatives from minority groups, including minority women, in the country strategy development process. This may include holding meetings in regions where

minorities predominantly live, offering language translation services or extending childcare provisions to parents.

61. Development agencies should consider the establishment of standing advisory bodies comprising representatives of minority groups (or including members of minority and majority groups), including women, to support agencies on policy issues affecting the communities of those minority groups. Development organizations should provide funding and technical support aimed at strengthening civil society organizations of minority groups. Information on the activities of development agencies should be made accessible to minorities, including through proactive outreach to minority communities, minority media outlets and the translation of relevant documents. Agencies should promote hiring policies that foster the active recruitment and retention of minority workers.

62. Development agencies should assess the impact of their proposed and implemented programmes and projects on minority groups. In their technical cooperation roles, development agencies can help safeguard against well-meaning but harmful practices used by Governments for increasing the participation of minorities in the mainstream economy, such as forced migration or restrictions on traditional livelihood practices. Development agencies can use their good offices to urge Governments to ensure the effective participation of minorities, including minority women, in research on root causes and in decision-making on such strategies. Agencies are encouraged to adopt their own safeguard policies and complaints mechanisms to ensure that practices harmful to minorities are not used in their operational activities.

H. Human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system

63. Relevant treaty bodies and special procedures of the United Nations and the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations have made important contributions in their jurisprudence to the protection of minority rights in economic life. They should continue to review the rights of persons belonging to minorities in their monitoring of domestic and international legislation and policies pertaining to economic participation. The individual complaints and inquiry procedures under several of the core human rights treaties similarly provide a unique opportunity to catalyse positive change for the enjoyment of the rights of minorities.

64. A voluntary fund for minorities should be created to enable minority representatives to participate in, assist and use the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system. The voluntary fund also should provide funding for projects managed by minority groups aimed at enhancing the enjoyment of minority rights, including strengthening effective participation of minorities in economic life.
