

Ms Gay McDougall second statement in the concluding remarks

I think that the last two days and the discussions and the presentations and input oral and written that we have received. And the new association that we have formed, the networking, etc; have enlarged and enriched our understanding of what is faced by children of disadvantaged or oppressed minorities around the world. This UN Forum on Minorities the inaugural session I think it has been quite successful. We have much more work to do starting tomorrow when we will start probably an arduous task of trying to take all that has been said here and distil it into a revised draft of the recommendations. It is our hope to be able to do that in time for it to be in my own annual report as Independent Expert on Minorities to the Human Rights Council. And that would be presented in March. We will reach out to many of you for your further opinions and views as we go forward with this. But I just want to close by saying, that I think that these last two days have been very very good in begging to walk the path that was walked by our predecessor institution, the Working Group on Minorities. Which did so much in shaping the legal framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of Minorities. It has really sort of opened the door and charted the way for my own work as an independent expert and for this Forum.

This Forum also builds on the critical work of the treaty bodies, all of them really. From disabilities and migrants to Committee Against Racism, Against Discrimination Against Women, the committee on the rights of the child, all of them have been very critical in their jurisprudence. Have been very critical in moving forward the protection of the rights of minorities in the context of their treaty bodies mandate. I would say also that it builds very much on the shoulders and the work of the World Conference Against Racism in 2001 in Durban. And I think it sets the stage and creates further input into Durban review process that will have its final meeting this coming year. The Durban Program of Action adopted in the 2001 Conference urge states to "insure equal access to education for all in law and in practice and to refrain from any legal or other measures leading to imposed segregation in any form in access to schools". And I think that those who negotiated very careful words. And I think we have also learned and it has been pointed out even in this closing session that a denial of the right of education to minorities not only violates the right of minorities, but it also robs the entire society of its best opportunity to foster social cohesion, to increase development and respect for diversity of views and experiences of all. On that note and with my deep thank to all of you to the Secretariat that worked so hard with us on achieving this forum. To the interpreters who helped us all communicate - critically important. And finally, to our Chairperson who has given us the inspiration of her example and the more important, her critical thought and opinions through this process. I want to thank you all and wish you safe trips home.