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Madame chair, distinguished audience,

I would like to thank the organizers for the opportunity to address this Forum on Minority Issues on behalf of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee is very pleased at being present here. We have to establish close cooperation, since the monitoring work of the Committee very much focuses on those groups of children who are in danger to be left behind. Children from minority groups are one of these groups, which need the committee's utmost attention.

The issue most frequently addressed with regard to children from minorities in the Concluding Observations of the Committee is education. This must not be explained in length here today: So many children from minorities are excluded from education. This is a fundamental human rights violation as education is *the* gateway to empowering children, women and men to strive for their rights and also to enjoy their lives, when these rights are realized.

The second commonest issue in the Concluding Observations with respect to children from minorities are serious concerns about violations of the rights to equality and non-discrimination.

The Convention has not only article 2, which ensures all rights of the Convention to

every child *without any discrimination*. It also has the remarkable article 30, which specifically says:

"In those States in which ... minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her *own culture*, to profess and practise his or her *own religion*, or to use his or her *own language*."

The content of this article strengthens, what is said in article 29 on the aims of education. These aims include the respect, which has to be developed in school by all children for all children's cultural identity, language and values (para. 1, c).

Doing justice to the equality of educational opportunity of children from minorities asks for more than some superficial measures: In view of these children who need special attention, the Committee calls upon State parties

- to start with education already in the years before school entry
- to prevent dropout from school at all levels;
- to provide education at least at the beginning in the child's language and to respect the child's language at all levels;
- to adapt instruction and learning to the rich potentials of these children;
- to give the culture, the history, the religion and traditions of children from minorities and their families a central place in the curriculum;
- to encourage children's and their parents' effective participation;
- to specifically train and sensitize teachers; and
- to allocate adequate resources in order to cover all costs of education.

The Committee always underlines the need for disaggregated data on enrolment in educational institutions, attendance of school and dropout from school in order to diagnose the effectiveness of the educational system.

Please, make these issues strong in your recommendations!

Thank you, Madame chair.