

ARTICLE 19 Statement (Agenda Item 4)

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Madam Chair —

The effective political participation of minorities is a subject of concern for civil society groups focusing on the promotion of non-discrimination and equality — but also to those human rights organisations promoting freedom of expression, notably ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Freedom of Expression.

In ARTICLE 19's view, the protection of freedom of expression and the right of access to information is both an essential prerequisite for and a practical consequence of the effective political participation of minorities.

We welcome that the draft recommendations of the second session of the Forum on Minority Issues broadly recognise the connections between freedom of expression and access to information and the rights of minorities to political participation, as well as the roles played by a wide range of actors beyond the state, including the media, in promoting genuine political participation of minorities.

However, ARTICLE 19 believes that the draft recommendations would be further enhanced through a stronger assertion of the fundamental and mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between freedom of expression and right of access to information, on the one hand, and the meaningful and informed political participation of minorities, on the other.

We recommend that the draft recommendations include more detailed provisions on the role of the state and the media in promoting freedom of expression and the equality rights of minorities. In particular, the draft recommendations should recognise that all states should have in place an independent and publicly accountable regulatory framework for the media, including new media, which promotes pluralism and equality.

The draft recommendations should also urge all mass media organisations to take positive steps to ensure that their workforces are diverse and representative of society as a whole and to seek a multiplicity of sources and voices within different communities, rather than representing communities as monolithic blocs. Furthermore, media organisations should be encouraged to adopt self-regulatory systems to guarantee the rights of correction and reply of persons belonging to minorities.

ARTICLE 19 makes these recommendations on the basis of *The Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression*, a progressive interpretation of international law and best practice standards which were agreed by a high level of group of experts convened by ARTICLE 19 earlier in 2009.

ARTICLE 19 commends these principles to the Forum and shall submit substantive comments on the draft recommendations on the basis of these principles to the Secretariat of the Forum in due-course.

Thank you Madam Chair.