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Theme 3: Barriers to the effective participation of the Amazigh population in public affairs concerning them.

Mr or Mrs Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are happy to be participating in this Forum for the first time and to be able to give our view on the crucial issue of the barriers that impede the Amazigh population from effectively participating in public affairs concerning them.

We would firstly like to specify that the Amazigh people live throughout North Africa and the Sahara. However, colonisation and other political and historical factors have led to an Amazigh community of almost 4 million members currently living across Europe, principally in France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Whether they live throughout North Africa or Europe, the Amazigh are faced with the same policies of concealment, denial and assimilation and of course non-recognition. As a result of this, Amazigh populations struggle to make themselves visible and establish political "weight", which excludes them from genuine and "effective" participation in political decision making concerning them.

North African governments say that there are people with Amazigh backgrounds or language within their administrations, Parliament and even government. This is true, however within the State authorities the Amazighs are not able to exercise any freedom of expression or freedom of action. Further, those who occupy political positions do not owe these positions to their legitimacy as representative of their community, but rather to their ability to guarantee or contribute to the established order, to give a democratic image of the state regime and often to act as a conduit at the local level.

Furthermore, while no approved political party in North Africa defends the specific rights of the Amazighs, laws prohibit the establishment of political parties on a linguistic or regional basis. In reality, this aims at preventing the Amazighs from creating their own political parties and from defending their interests. It is upon this basis that the Moroccan Amazigh Democratic Party was prohibited in 2007 and that the Movement for the Liberation of Kabylie was not authorized by Algerian authorities.

In Europe, governments also conceal Amazigh identity or even dilute it into a broader and more consensual identity: Arab, Muslim, and Maghrebin. This deprives the Amazighs of the necessary visibility to be listened to and to become eligible to participate in public affairs.

In order to guarantee Amazigh participation in the decision-making process, here are our recommendations:

- To North African States : Modification of domestic laws, including the Basic Law, such that linguistic and cultural plurality be recognised, and each community or group be given the right to create their own autonomous institutions;
- To European States inhabited by large ethnic or linguistic minorities: Respect for diversity and meeting the requirements for existing ethnic or cultural groups to be represented in political institutions and public administrations. The state should also establish or support the creation of institutions and programmes dedicated to each culture living within its territory;
- To the international community: A guarantee to follow up on the Forum recommendations, to organise or help organise regional and national Forums, and to reflect on the creation of a normative tool supporting minority rights.

Thank you