

Draft presentation by Mr Antti Korkeakivi on the work of OHCHR on Minorities and Effective Participation

2nd session of the Forum on Minority Issues

13 November 2009

Agenda item VII

Concrete Steps to advance minority political participation and to build capacity of minorities to participate effectively

As was stated yesterday at the opening of this session of the Forum, minority rights are a key theme for the High Commissioner and for her office. Minority work of the office contains a range of activities promoting and protecting the right to participate in decision-making.

In order to get a full picture of these activities, we would like to invite you to consult a document prepared for this forum, entitled Work of the OHCHR and human rights bodies with regard to Minorities and the Right to Effective Participation (A/HRC/FMI/2009/5). The said document, available at the back of the room,

- Outlines key human rights provisions, including the Minorities Declaration and related commentary
- Provides an overview of work on this theme by special procedures (including IEMI), the UPR and the Durban process
- Highlights selected conclusions of human rights treaty bodies
- Gives an overview of thematic advice, capacity-building and field engagement by OHCHR aimed to advance the right to participate in decision-making
 - o Our thematic work involves for example guidelines and good practice on policing in diverse societies, where participation and recruitment of minorities in policing is one of the key themes
 - o Our capacity-building efforts include also
 - minority fellowships, and I am pleased to note that a number of our current and former fellows are actively taking part in this session
 - community-led training
 - Field engagement – e.g. Afrodescendants in LAC

Draft recommendations of the Forum contain a number of initiatives where we as an office could play a role. OHCHR could for example

- Provide support for country-specific consultative structures for minorities in places where such structures do not exist. Here, it is important to provide comparative perspective, to indicate what has worked and what has not worked.

- Support dialogue between representatives of parliamentary committees or other parliamentary structures devoted to human rights and/or minorities to discuss participation of minorities in political decision-making and to encourage networking between such structures.
- Encourage the Inter-Agency Group on Minority Issues to devote one of its upcoming meetings to the topic of effective participation by minorities to discuss the respective roles of its members in promoting effective participation, within the larger framework of Article 9 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
- Ensure effective participation of minorities in the deliberations taking place at the level of the United Nations.
- Through field presences, help to ensure that key laws relating to minority rights and related issues are consistent with international human rights standards, including the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and that these standards are fully reflected in future legislative initiatives.

Finally, I would like to stress that at the OHCHR we were much wish to practice what we preach and this applies also to the issue of participation. Therefore, we would like to make sure that representatives of minorities are involved in the design and implementation of our activities and I would like to encourage minority representatives and expert present here today to pursue a close dialogue with the Office.

Thank you for your attention.

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