

Colleagues and friends. I feel a great honour to be allowed speak on this forum on behalf of United Nations Committee on All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) which I am a member. On the chairperson of CERD Ambassador Anya Kamal I would like to sincerely thank the Office of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues for this invitation. All issues relating to minorities are very close to our hearts in CERD and therefore we take this forum very seriously. It is a serious attempt to deal with the issues of discrimination, and marginalisation of sections of our societies.

Madam Chair in its guidance to the paper presenters the Secretariat of this forum indicating inter alia that we should not read academic papers, they would welcome comments focused on the recommendations. That is what we have decided to do, that is to focus on the draft recommendations on minorities and their participation in economic life, which were made available to us quite early. Madam Chair, I hope that this will not bore you if we make our comments direct on the recommendations, paragraph by paragraph.

As time is of essence we shall concentrate on the main issues only and then make presentation available to the Secretariat however before I do that I would like to make two main comments. First one is on engagement of CERD in issues affecting minorities, they work of the CERD in the area of minorities is captured very well in paragraph 47 on the recommendations at footnote number 5. Here it has been correctly noted that CERD has issued three general recommendations which in one way or another touch on minorities. These are general recommendation 27, on discrimination against the Roma, general recommendation 29 on discrimination based on descent and general recommendation 32 on meaning and scope of special measures, here it is important to note Madam Chair that the Committee has also established a working group on early warning and urgent action, this group is intended to advise state parties on laws and policies which are likely to lead to discrimination and advise the UN and the state parties concerned. There might be issues of discrimination to come up in future. Most of the work of this group which reports to the whole committee has been on marginalisation of minorities in all parts of the world. That is from the Americas to Africa and Asia, also a number of states have been invited by CERD or the states themselves have sought audience with the committee to dialogue on burning issues relating to minorities in their territories. At the same time, issues relating to minorities have been featuring prominently in the dialogues carried out between CERD and the State parties on the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination ICERD in the process of presenting their reports. Thus concluding observations of the Committee on the reports of many state parties contain specific observations on minorities. The second main point, Madam Chair that I would like to make is in relation to the use of the term reduction of poverty. Now the issue we are asking here is whether we are asking for the reduction of poverty or eradication of poverty. If you read through the document you find a lot of use of the word "reduction of poverty", we take it that, we sometimes take terms put on us without much reflection and what we are saying is we should thrive for moving towards the eradication of poverty and not reduction because Madam Chair if you reduce poverty, poverty will still be there.

And therefore there is a need in this recommendation to use progressive language which gives hope to minorities and therefore I would ask the drafters of the recommendations, maybe to revisit and

craft paragraph 19, 20, 35 and 47 and 50, 19, 20, 35 and 4 if necessary because the other paragraphs which are talking of reduction of poverty not eradication of poverty.

Having given those 2 main points let me now go into the specific comments on paragraph, there are paragraphs which invite comments which the office of the independent expert on minority issues might wish to consider in the process of coming out with the final draft of the recommendations. Madam Chair we have made comments on 15 paragraphs, these are paragraphs, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 31, 37, 44, 48, 49, 52. Madam Chair as time is of essence it would not be possible to go over all these paragraphs, I would just comment on some. I see I have only 4 minutes left and then I will provide the paper to the organisers. The first one is paragraph 14, Madam Chair is on multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. Here the basis given are sex, age and a disability. We are advising that maybe there is a need for adding religion is well, because religion is an important matter which can also be a basis. Madam Chair paragraph 17 is on the root causes of discrimination, here in paragraph 17 states are called upon to collect data on minorities and it says in the process that they might get the roots causes, we are arguing that they might get the state of affairs but not the root causes and therefore there is a need for a separate paragraph for research, so as to go to the root causes of the problems of minorities. Another problem, another area which I may look at is on paragraph 22, paragraph 22 is on the compensation for lands of minorities which is taken also they divide between urban and rural area, when it comes to wages. We are suggesting that there should not be a difference between rural and urban in compensation, and that compensation should be on commercial rate and should be prompt. Madam Chair on paragraph 37, on civil society, here there is a major point missed, in most developing countries legal aid is provided by civil society and not by government. And therefore this paragraph 37 should capture the need for civil society to spearhead the issue of providing legal aid and assistance to the minorities. Paragraph 44 on corporate social responsibility, I think we know of corporations who take millions and give back mosquito nets and so on, we need to be more serious about corporate social responsibility, they should go to the heart of the matter and assist the poor. On the voluntary fund paragraph 48 we are arguing that this government should be asked to contribute to this voluntary fund to assist minorities and also part of this funds should be used to enable minorities to come to bodies like this that there are minorities that can't make it to Geneva, these funds should be used to enable these groups to be able to come and express themselves, in meetings like this. On international financial institutions, Madam Chair, we are saying that these institutions which funds big projects like dams, hydroelectric plants and so on, they should be careful about what will happen to minorities whose lands are flooded by these dams and so on. Lastly developing agencies, paragraph 52, I think they should be more friendlier, more conscious and appreciating issues of minorities.

Madam Chairperson because of time I would like to stop there, thank you very much.