

## Egypt's intervention during the Forum on Minority Issues

### Unofficial Translation

My delegation has listened with interest to the intervention made earlier that tackled the situation of Egyptian Copts. In this regard, I would like to note at the outset that Egyptian Copts constitute part and parcel of the Egyptian social and national fabric. Therefore, they are treated as if they represent a religious minority. Indeed, Christian religious leaders in Egypt do not adopt this concept.

The Egyptian constitution guarantees the right of citizenship and provides for non-discrimination on the basis of religion. This does not apply only at the legal and legislative levels but also in practice. The Egyptian government seeks to establish the concept of the civil state, where the principle of applying the Constitution and the rule of law to all citizens without distinction overrides.

Egypt has witnessed throughout its modern history, Copts occupying high level and leadership positions in the country, including various ministerial portfolios, in addition to the representation of Copts in different fields, including justice and prosecution, police, military and diplomatic corps, where Egyptian Copts occupied leadership positions, including that of Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as senior positions in the State, such as governors, in addition to membership in the People's Assembly and various trade unions, and the significant representation and active participation of Egyptian Copts in the areas of trade, culture, politics, and their important contribution to the Egyptian economy.

With respect to amending the requirement to indicate religious affiliation in identity papers, it should be noted that the national dialogue in this regard has not a consensus decision calling for its cancelation. Indeed, many parties call for keeping it out of respect for the specificity of Christians, particularly with regard to the application of personal status laws that are based not only on Islamic Shari'a law, but also to the application of Canon Law, a feature unique to the Egyptian system.

With regard to the occurrence of certain incidents of violence in some areas, it should be noted that the majority of these events do not emanate from religious reasons, but are later characterized as such. In any case, such incidents are all subject to investigations and appropriate legal and judicial proceedings, in addition to the active role of the national human rights mechanisms, such as the National Council for Human Rights. On the other hand, the Egyptian government seeks and is keen to purify the religious discourse, in consultation with both Christian and Muslim religious leaders, to promote the spirit of dialogue, tolerance away from extremism. The same approach is being adopted by the government in the formulation of educational curricula.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that Egypt pays particular attention to cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and the continuous dialogue with the independent expert on minority rights. Egypt has recently received a number of visits by special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and such visits are closely examined with at the national level.

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