

Diversity and Community Relations Judges, UK on Item VI

Yes, thank you madam Chairperson and also Independent Expert for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I am Judge Kamil from the UK.

The UNDM provides specifically that persons specifically belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life. Unfortunately, despite some progress there are many challenges that continue to impede effective participation of minorities in economic life in the countries where they live. Often in spite of educational achievements they still face obstacles in their access in gaining employment. It is well established that in addition to providing economic security and advancement, employment encourages broader social advancement. It provides a route out of poverty in is central to efforts and programs that are directed towards poverty reduction and inclusion in the economic life of society.

Speaking as a Judge from the United Kingdom, my involvement in affirmative activities to promote the rights of minorities includes clearing the path towards success to judicial positions in the UK and the formation of a group of judges called Diversity and Community Relation Judges. Access to a judicial position in the UK has often been perceived as a bar to persons who did not fit the stereotype of white, male, upper-class, Christian and middle aged. Thus apparently ruling out anyone who was from an ethnic, national, religious, or linguistic minority. However as set out in several human rights law instruments – special measures or affirmative action are very effective in addressing inequality of treatment and creating an opportunity for minorities to participate effectively in economic life. The use of special measure is a fundamental part of the realisation of the right to equality. Such measures can include training and recruitment initiatives or quotas in public or private sector employment to promote access to labour markets for minorities.

As regards to judiciary in England and Wales, much effort has been deployed to secure access of qualified minorities to the bench. In addition to positive measures in judicial appointments commission has been established to monitor appointments for judicial positions and to ensure that the judiciary is fairly representative of the composition of society. The significant increase of the number of minority judges states such as United Kingdom have recognised that participation of minorities in economic and public life benefits the wider society. Participation of minorities in the judiciary can promote access to economic participation and convey trust in judiciary from persons belonging to minority groups despite progress a lot more needs to be done. Minorities whether as a result of non-dominance or numerical size should benefit from economic participation and the opportunities offered to other members of society. Therefore, it is important that more effort and many more countries be deployed to take into account the rights and needs of minorities. Successful practices such as the recruitment of minorities in the judiciary as a way out of poverty should be replicated. So finally, overall it is through the implementation of policies and strategies towards a better and more effective participation of minorities in economic life that we will all benefit from a more peaceful and a more inclusive society. Thank you.