

Utim Terhemem Item V

Male, English

Thank you madam Chair,

My name is Utin Terhemem. I am a member of the Christian religious minority in Northern Nigeria and I represent Humanity Knights Network, an organisation working on development assistance for marginalised religious minorities in Northern Nigeria. Religious minorities comprise of mostly Christian, Indigenous or settler communities, and non-Muslims living in regions where Sharia law is operated. Religious minorities in effective participation in economic life in the region results in the violation of the rights to property, non-discrimination and economic participation. Statistics provided by the central bank of Nigeria show extreme poverty rates in northern states where there is a greater concentration of majority religious group in political process. This deepens periodic indigenous settler conflicts in which informal economic sector businesses belonging to religious minorities mostly Christians are targeted. Intra-state measures are unable to afford adequate remedies for business laws or de-secretion as a result of conflicts. This and other issues inside economic protection is amongst religious minorities in such states, as a form of self-preservation to secure their rights. The government of Nigeria has taken positive measures to address some of these issues including the constitution of the inter-faith Council to facilitate dialogue among religious groups, employing judicial and executive counter-measures, to discourage religious violence, and sponsoring conflict-resolution documentaries on religious dialogue.

These positive measures can be better, if it addresses in detail in which religious minority community suffer different levels of realisation of human economic and minority rights abuses that undermine the impact of development programs on their lives. In particular, the slow and partial mechanisms for providing justice for victims of religious violence, the exclusion of religious disaggregated data from some national population census, and the absence of the national mechanism for monitoring and mainstreaming minority issues into development. Combined with the absence of freedom of information bill obscured transparent accountability of economic poverty reduction strategies and its impact on effective participation of religious minorities in economic life. Looking at the experience in Nigeria, I recommend that for the effective application of recommendation 12, 21, 27 of the UN Forum on Minority Issues. UN should work with governments to mainstream minority rights into economic poverty reduction strategies. To address the specific issues of discriminated minorities and to secure their participation in economic life. Greater technical support is needed to support government in developing legislation that protects the property rights of religious and other minorities, and their recovery of economic losses on occasions on religious tribe marginalisation. I also subscribe to the recommendation 48 regarding a voluntary fund for minorities. Thank you all for your kind attention.