

4<sup>th</sup> Session on the Forum on Minority Issues  
Ms. Libérate Nicayenzi – Burundi on Item VI

In French.

Thank you Madam Chair. I would like to start with a little reminder that Burundi is a country in central Africa with a population of 8 million. And the population density is 254 people per square kilometres and the area is just over 27 000 square kilometres. There are three ethnic groups Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas. The Twas or the Batwas are an ethnic minority which suffered and continues to suffer from marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion in all areas of society, economic, politics, society and cultural life. But UNIPROBA has been set up. This is an NGO to protect and promote the rights of the Batwa minority. And with political will and I underline that expression certain positive changes are taking place to the benefit of the Batwa minority. Firstly, the national constitution in article 164 and 180 provides for the co-optation of a certain number of Batwa people to the national assembly parliament: three that are in the lower house and three in the Senate – the Upper House. And they represent therefore the ethnic minority, this ethnic minority. During the first transition period in 1998 we saw the appointment of a woman for the minority in the national assembly and the Parliament and then following the Erusha Agreement in the 2000 which led to the creation of the second house of Parliament we saw the appointment of 3 Batwas including a woman to represent the Batwa minority. And following the election in 2009 the 2005 Constitution reserved 6 seats in Parliament for the Batwa minority including 2 for Batwa women. And following the 2010 elections the constitution has in Article 164 and Article 180 kept the 6 seats for the Batwa minority. The electoral code of 2010 spells out how the Batwa minority should be co-opted that is to say on the basis of the assertions which up and running of the representative on the ground. The community Law dated 2010 indicates that amongst the 15 members of the community council 1 Batwa should be co-opted where the Batwas are representative and where they are represented in the list of a political party. Hence, taking the total of 1139 member of community council there are 69 of them who belong to the Batwa minority of which 12 are women in the community council representing that is to say if the political party did not withdraw from the respective elections. In addition, the Batwa minority also has a member in the national land and property commission and another member in the state inspectorate general appointed by presidential decree. Three presidential decrees are important to us. Because they provide for free healthcare for children under the age of 5, for free maternity care and for free primary school education. Along side this we have seen the Religions for Peace set up and this has helped the co-existence of the 3 ethnic minority above mentioned. In addition, thanks to awareness raising and lobbying which has been undertaken by UNIPROBA we now see collaboration with various different stakeholders when it comes to promoting and developing the rights of the Batwa minority. I am thinking in particular of [forums] such as ministries, United Nations agencies, the media, civil society, NGOs, international NGOs. And we are involved in a number of projects here, providing for access to justice, access to land, to citizenship, and education on human rights, specifically the rights of ethnically...women from ethnic minorities and determining why it is that some young girls are not going to school. Girls that is who come from the Batwa minority and there are also agriculture and [huspentry]

projects. All this work has been done inter alia thank to UNIPROBA. UNIPROBA is represented at various different levels, there are 17 focal points as well as 70 women located in the provinces and who represent the association. In addition, there is representation taken from the focal points and 119 communities. And this means that the spread of information has been promoted by UNIPROBA. Nevertheless, we are still faced with a number of challenges for instance chronic poverty, marked illiteracy among women. Small numbers of girls going to schools and this means that it is difficult for them to get jobs, it is difficult for them enjoy social integration and they are not properly represented at various levels. In addition, people are ignorant of the law. There is lack of leadership amongst women which means that they are not able to pull their weight when it comes to making their voice heard. When it comes to lobbying. IN addition we have the question of [manage] taking place when are just 12,13,14,or 15 because of this tradition that over the age of 15 women are no longer girls an no longer beautiful enough to marry or appropriate to marry. This is one of the many issues concerning women and girls rights, which need to be taken into account. We would like to make the following recommendations. We would like to recommend the precise data to be gathered on minorities in various countries in order to lead to effective policy to promote the interests of women and girls from minorities, and to ensure the implementation of these policies. We also need to see a fund set up to ensure education for girls from minorities and to make sure that they can go to secondary school and also to help them in the choices that they make in school so that they are better placed to get jobs. Thirdly, mechanisms to encourage women and girls who come from minorities to take part in politics and to vote in and, indeed, to stand for election. Fourthly, we encourage the organisation of awareness raising workshops for women and girls from minorities. In particular, to help them become parts of decision-making bodies of the local and national levels. Thank you.