

Merci Madam Chair

My name is Mandana Zarrehparvar and I represent the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights is a national human rights institution with mandate in accordance to the Paris Principles. The Institute is also a National Equality Body on the grounds of gender, race and ethnic origin in accordance with EU anti-discrimination directives.

I have kindly asked for the floor to raise this honourable forum's attention to the following challenges in the practical implementation of the Declaration:

The first challenge is the lack of awareness on the existence of the Declaration on the rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities among tirale national Human rights and Equality Bodies that play an important role in implementation of the Declaration. In EU we do have strong anti-discrimination legislation. However the Declaration is an added value to our work and awareness as it is important.

The second challenge is: none existent or at best weak civil society organisations on the grounds of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in Europe. As a human rights institute we are committed to engage with civil society. However when it comes to civil society organisations on grounds this Declaration covers we run into organisations that have no resources to participate and to contribute.

Funding to civil society organisations are cut severely and fund raising possibilities are marginal. Funding is often project based - this means that the organisations do not have an opportunity to build up, become sustainable and be in a position to engage effectively.

Third challenge I will mention is the status of the Declaration itself. It is a declaration and therefore one adhered to\ only if there is political willingness.

In the present situation - we are experiencing a blazing economic crisis with austerity plans that affect largely the vulnerable people in the European societies. Social unrest and poverty that is felt by the majority population is often translated into far right populist sentiments that are counter-productive to promotion and protection of the rights of minorities.

A last challenge is coming from within the minority groups themselves - a lack of respect of other minorities rights is showing its vicious face. It is important to recognise that discrimination is not only a minority - majority issue. It is a question of respect of all humans irrespective of where they come from, which ethnic groups they belong to, which religion they practice, and which language they wish to speak.

Thank you Madam Chair.