

Permanent Mission of Egypt on Item V

Madam Chair, Madam Independent Expert.

At the outset the delegation of Egypt seizes the opportunity to welcome the constructive discussion that are currently taking place at the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the Forum on Minority Issues and we look forward that ideas and best practices that we presented in the current session provide a new momentum that can further promote the Declaration for persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities on its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We also congratulate Madam Majga for her able chairmanship of the Forum and as a member of the African group we take pride her membership in the African Regional Human Rights mechanism.

We're taking the floor to provide brief comments regarding the interventions delivered by the representatives of the Kelme Centre and the Human Rights Centre. We have listened with great interest to the statements and we would like to clarify, that regardless of the content of the statement which is mired by so many imprecise information we would like to register our disagreement with it conceptually more than anything else. And believe that this intervention does not belong to this Forum and is irrelevant to its discussions. As a definition of a minority does not apply to the subject group of the fore mentioned statements.

Egyptians who are Coptic Orthodox Christians are not a minority. Not because the Government refrains to recognise them as such, but because Coptic Egyptians themselves have repeatedly and firmly rejected any suggestions to be classified as a minority. An account of the positions of the Coptic Orthodox Christian Egyptian Church and the main Coptic civil associations in this regard can be easily resorted to verify this fact.

Speaking about the nation that lives in harmony for 14 hundred years and a country which is the homeland of the biggest Christian community in the Middle East and Africa and the oldest Church of the world. Necessitate understanding of the historical and societal facts that are seemingly not available for those who see the Egyptian population through this illusive lens.

We reiterate the challenges in the domain of freedom of religion and belief or intercommunal relationships in Egypt and around the world should remain a key issue on the United Nations human rights agenda. Through the agreed on, and relevant channels including the special procedures, treaty bodies and the UPR mechanisms. We believe that the clarity of concepts, the criteria of classification and the respects of mandates of forums and mechanisms should be continuously observed for the purpose to ensure their effectiveness and credibility.

I thank you.