

Madam Chairperson, Madam independent expert, distinguished delegates, and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. Today marks the 20th anniversary of declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. This anniversary offers important opportunity for the European Roma Policy Centre and minority rights advocates to share views on existing practices on the implementation of the declaration and raising awareness about it. After 20 years when analysing the status of implementation, many Roma continue to face discrimination or social exclusion because stereotypes and intolerance towards this minority group still persists by the majority. The fifth session of the forum on minority aims to raise awareness on the rights of minorities as ensuring the declaration and ensure its practical implementation. The ERPC hopes that today's discussion will help facilitate our work to advance and protect more effectively the rights of persons belonging to Roma minority. In this regard the ERPC states that future opportunities for raising awareness and ensuring practical implementation of the declaration should be strengthened through the following recommendations; First, we strongly urge all participants to the forum to contribute to raising awareness of the minority declaration through actively using social media, campaigns on minority rights and designing outreach programmes.

Second, we emphasise the need for governments to secure the rights of the Roma minority at the national level and ensure that Roma people are aware of their rights as ensured in the declaration.

Third, we strongly encourage all stakeholders to ensure that their efforts the full implementation of the declaration through enabling and financing regional networks and innovative advocacy initiatives in promoting the rights of Roma minority. In conclusion I would like to thank the office of the high commissioner for human rights for giving me the opportunity to take part in the minority fellowship programme. Thank you.