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Forum on Minority Issues
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Dear Chairwoman,

Dear participants of the Fifth Session

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. We advocate on behalf of individuals of Champa descent.

Persons of Champa descent are one of the ancient peoples of Vietnam and Cambodia, with the population of about 1 million people. Until today, we have preserved our language and unique culture.

Recognition and approval of the General Assembly of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities, 20 years after its adoption in 1992, is a historic event and achievement of persons belonging to minorities in the fight for their rights at the international level.

The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities is a comprehensive, balanced document of international law designed to protect and ensure the development of persons belonging to minorities on the basis of human rights.

We express our gratitude to Vietnam and Cambodia, for their demonstration of political will and recognition of the Declaration of the Rights of minorities.

We welcome the climate of intercultural harmony, respect and understanding ruling today in both Cambodia and Vietnam.

Now we sincerely hope that the Vietnamese and Cambodian law will contribute to the protection of minority rights, creating conditions for their sustainable development.

It should also be taken into account that in many Western countries, the system of legislative protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities is based on decades of experience and well-developed tradition of political self-organization of national, cultural, racial and other groups. Vietnam and Cambodia as independent multinational states need not only specific legislation on the rights of persons belonging to minorities, but also guarantees of compliance.

However, a review of the situation of persons belonging to minorities in the world, prepared by the independent expert on minority issues, speaks of the overall situation of persons belonging to minorities in the modern world, the progress made, both remaining and arising challenges and the role of the Declaration in solving those.

Here are a few examples from the report:

Persons belonging to minorities and their lives:

Poverty and minimal welfare, social problems

Persons belonging to minorities and their culture:

threats to cultural diversity, dying languages, assimilation by dominant society

Persons belonging to minorities and their health:

life expectancy is 10-20 years less, malnutrition, infant mortality

Persons belonging to minorities and human rights:

Violence, displacement, assimilation, marginalization, criminalization of protests

Key findings of the Global Report on the situation of persons belonging to minorities in the world:

Shortcomings, especially in the field of education, access to the media, use of minority languages in the public sphere, and participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public affairs.

Minorities have no opportunity to participate in the planning of development of sound and viable national identity.

Left out of the political process and access to decision-making and self-management.

The huge gap between international norms, national laws and non-existent practice of use, especially at the local level.

We would put our names under each of the findings of the global survey. All these challenges are relevant to people of Champa descent worldwide.

For us it is not a statement of facts, but a call to action at the national level through the recognition of rights and the implementation of the articles of the Declaration on the rights of minorities.

We call on independent experts on minority issues to ensure, through the UN Council on Human Rights at its 22nd session, for the Declaration and its articles to become indicators for the system of monitoring the situation of persons belonging to minorities at the national level, as well as for the UN treaty bodies.

Thank you for attention.