

The best way to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the minority declaration is certainly by contributing to the development and adoption of more efficient approaches and methods in addressing its practical implementation. I would like to highlight two related questions from a central European and Hungarian perspective. Why should the minority protection be enhanced and how can it be enhanced? Perhaps one of the major achievements of the international minority protection system as it developed in the last few decades is a new essentially positive attitude towards minorities that are considered a valuable and often underused resource. For example, a recent resolution adopted by the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe entitled minority languages an asset for regional development, states that I quote "Regional and minority languages are not luxuries as well as an integral part of Europe's rich cultural heritage they have a vital role to play in increasing the integration and economic prosperity of a greater European area" end of quotation.

There are conditions necessary for the development thus the survival of a minority cultures and languages. If a state responsible for a given national minority does not put in place all the necessary structures to effectively and adequately protect the community then the minority culture in question is sentenced to death, even if the State meets at least in theory all its internationally binding obligations. And if we have a look at the recent census data in countries of Central Europe we can conclude that the threat of their disappearance is anything but realistic. We must act to avoid such an outcome. We know of some examples in the 21st century Europe that adequately protect traditional national minorities in difficult situations but these documents like the Acti Sari Plan and the Ohrid Agreement had been borne in post-conflict situations following a violent and devastating conflict. We need an equally effective, much more proactive approach. The recent commentary number 3 of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention, for the Protection of National Minorities constitutes a welcome improvement in many respects. It puts the accent on the positive approach and actions by states, tailor-made solutions for specific situations. It encourages policy based on needs and decisions made in close consultations with representatives of the interested minority groups. The document also states that it is not only important for speakers of the minority languages to learn majority languages, but also vice versa. I think that in the same way the UN must listen to the voices of minorities in order to fine tune the future implementation of the declaration, this forum plays a crucial role in this regard.

Thank you Madam chair.