

## Permanent Mission of Norway on Item IV

Thank you Madam Chair.

As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration the Norwegian Government would like to express its appreciation to all those that have contributed to the birth and existence of the declaration. This is also an occasion to look forward, and to enhance our common effort to implement the Declaration and its ideas and concepts at a national level. The identification of good practices is important as we face remaining challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of minorities.

We commend the independent expert's work in this regard and would like to highlight a few measures from our response to the independent expert's questioner on the implementation of the Declaration which we hope may be useful for other countries as well.

The Declaration pronounces that the states shall protect the existence and the identity of the national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities. Furthermore, the state shall encourage the condition to the promotion of identity. As the Secretary General said earlier today, the fulfilment of minority rights is key to justify the legitimacy of a democracy. A prerequisite is that a state recognises the minorities and appreciates the contribution to the society's cultural multitude. Unfortunately, history has shown that the contrary too often is the case also for Norway.

In Norway the national minorities are the Jews, the Roma, the Romani people, the Kvens and the Forest Finns. The Government of Norway has expressed its regrets to the assimilation policy to which all the national minorities have been subject to. The Government furthermore apologized on behalf of the state for the way in which the minorities have been treated. We believe these steps have been important in the ongoing reconciliation process between the majority and the minorities within our society, and as statements recognising the state's responsibility protecting the minorities and their identities.

These official apologies have been followed up – inter alia – with compensation schemes for minority groups. The compensation schemes serve as individual and collective compensation for the damages inflicted upon and the injustice committed against the minorities as a result of the past assimilation policy and also during the Second World War. The compensation includes the establishment of funds which help support promotion and protection of the culture and identity of the minorities. The funds are managed by the minorities themselves.

The minorities' effective participation in decision making processes is in general an important objective and is emphasised in the Declaration. The Norwegian Government has – in cooperation with our new minorities – established Contact Committee for immigrants and the authorities. This advisory body is appointed every four years and promotes the views of the immigrant population to the general public and the central government authorities.

Madam Chair, by sharing our common practices we can together work for the protection and promotion of minority rights.

Thank you.