

Remarks by the Independent Expert on Minority Issues (concluding remarks) - Rita Izsák

Thank you to you all for these very useful and constructive comments and for providing such a wealth of experience and perspectives. I have found these two days extremely inspiring. I want to thank you all for your participation. The many Member States that have attended and taken the floor, to tell us about your experiences and practices, also at the very heart of this Forum has been quite rightly the voices of minorities themselves. And I thank you all for being here and your valuable contributions. I have learned a great deal that will inform my work. I have been especially pleased to see so many young men and women, minority rights advocates here during this session. You have brought a lot of energy and creative ideas to this session.

I am encouraged to find the Declaration and the principles of minority rights contained in it are truly being taken up and used around the World. We have seen that good practices exist in all regions. In such areas as legislation, institutional attention to minority issues, projects targeting to address the problems of specific groups or key concerns, and local initiatives that are so important to the lives of families and communities. All of these demonstrate the attention that governments and other stakeholders are giving to minority issues.

Of course, we have also hear about the many challenges that remain. Especially in areas such as political participation, education, economic life, as well as issues effecting religious and linguistic minorities and in particular challenges facing women and girls. This has indeed informed us about the need for better implementation of the Declaration.

All comments and ideas to strengthen the recommendations will be given close consideration and will result in a document I hope will truly reflect all your views.

I hope that this Forum has met your expectations. You have invested your time, energy and resources in your participation and it is our commitment to show that your efforts over the last weeks have been worthwhile. But I do want to encourage you to continue your dialogue beyond this room and as you return to your homes. This Forum and the recommendations that it produces only fulfils their potential when they are translated to your actions in your countries and localities where challenges of minorities exist.

While we do not always agree, I think that agree that implementation of minority rights requires dialogue, consultation, understanding and sometimes compromise.

I also would like to join. First of all, I would like to thank the Chair for her excellent work. If such an English word exists, then her excellent chairwomanship. I was delighted to sit next to her and benefit from her very professional leadership of this Forum. And I'd like to join her in thanking the Secretariat without whom this Forum would not be as it is today. And it would be difficult to list all the people because there are so many, but they are to be found on the left of the Chair, and on the right of me. And all of those that have been running kilometres in this room to make sure that the Forum runs smoothly.

As we bring this session to the closing, I think that I can say with confidence that this session of the Forum has truly fulfilled our desire for it to raise awareness of the Declaration on its 20th anniversary year. And promote its implementation in every country and region.

Thank you very much.