

Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic on Item IV

Thank you Madam Chair.

Syria has a unique experience in coexistence and equal opportunities for all within a diverse spectrum of religions and ethnic groups which all enjoy equal rights and opportunities as well as freedom of religion and belief including issues related to personal status law. Syria has always been a sanctuary for those fleeing religious cleansing and oppression including the Armenians that fled the Turkish massacres in the beginning of the last century, and the Kurds who have fled Turkey in order to move to Syria. And more than half a million Palestinians hosted by Syria since Israel occupied Palestine in 1948.

All of these groups have equal rights and opportunities as those of Syrian citizens. Syria constitutes a safe haven for many who have fled the suppression and repression. The new constitution guarantees this principle and prohibits the extradition of political refugees.

Syria is now undergoing a number of reforms. We have given priority to the preservation of this social cohesion. This was reflected by the new constitution adopted by Syria by a popular referendum in 2012. The constitution affirms the right of all sects and religions to enjoy autonomy regarding issues related to personal status. The constitution also guarantees the cultural diversity as a common national heritage. The constitution also provides for equality amongst citizens in the rights and duties without discrimination be it gender, ethnic, religious origin, and affirms that that the role of the state as the guarantor of these rights.

The President of Syria issued a decree in 2011 to grant Syrian citizenship to non-Syrians, and those benefited from this decree – around 300 thousand people. However, Syrian minorities are being subjected to crimes and violations by terrorist armed groups which want to displace these minorities and forcibly displace them. Some are used as human shields in many areas in Syria, including the town of Homs.

Thank you.