

6th session of the Forum on Minority Issues

II. Legal framework and key concepts

Nisa Ul Haqq fi Bangsamoro (Women for Justice in the Bangsamoro) on Item II

Friends, fellow advocates, Madame chair,

Thank you.

The biggest challenge to minority rights worldwide is not the absence of an international legal framework but a lack of space in national laws and policies for claiming and enforcing these rights. While, international legal framework for minorities rights is emerging and readable discernible, the spaces in national law and policies are difficult to locate. It is this kind of recognition that is missing it is on this point that the special mechanisms of the United Nations should particularly help us out. In the Philippines, we have so addressed this gap to an extraordinary measure that is by means a negotiated peace agreement called 'the framework agreement on the (...)'. This framework peace agreement seeks to put an end to the longest running internal armed conflict in the world, seconded only by the one in Sudan.

On the Philippine Constitution, already recognise self-governance for Muslim minorities through an autonomous government. Through this peace agreement, however, we seek to flex the possibilities of a national constitution and modify the national legal framework towards the recognition of the rights of minorities as such.

We also hope that in the creation of this autonomous region we continue to promote the rights of other minorities within the same vision. Now this is an important document for Philippine social and political history, but what does it mean for the rest of the world? What does it mean for the advancement of the rights of religious minorities? First, this document is a step forward in minority rights-based approach to conflict resolution but more importantly is a reminder of what can be achieved if governments and minorities work together. This intervention, therefore, is a reminder to member states, granting constitutional and legal recognition to the rights of our minorities does not threaten but in fact reinforces state sovereignty and in the Philippines both sides are learning from this (...) sense of trust, confidence, and cooperation between government and minority groups. We learnt that together we can entrench peace and end decades of armed conflict. We learn that this partnership lends legitimacy to a constitutional set up, we learn that this cooperation leads to stability to economic and social institutions, we learn also that even that the international claim the integrity of the state is reinforced because the world sees that we can handle our own problems. Ladies and gentlemen let us remind governments that promoting the rights of minorities is more than just a moral imperative, it is a necessity for effective governance and national development.

Thank you very much.