

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

First of all I would like to join the previous speakers in thanking the panelists for their comprehensive presentations.

We all agree unanimously that genocide, heinous crimes, unfortunately, are not issues of the past and minorities groups are still the first target.

We appreciate all the draft recommendations provided, which are mainly based on the provisions of key international instruments such as the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, the Convention on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the Final Declaration of the 2005 World Summit.

Consequently, I also would like to mention another UN document – Resolution 22-22 on the Prevention of Genocide, that focuses on identifying the root causes of genocide and spotting warning signs in order to prevent or reduce the risk of genocide.

We must all be vigilants about indicators of an upcoming disaster and we must be able to recognize them in order to act in time. In this regard, all the signs earlier collected by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide are of primordial importance.

Marginalization policies, exclusions, discriminations and humiliations of a specific group and of minority populations, hate speech, incitement to hatred, destruction of property belonging to the minority, of its cultural and religious sites, the abusive interpretation of customs, are all warning signs and should be given immediate and appropriate response from the international community. We must all be vigilant about the increasing threats, where legitimization and institutionalization of discrimination against a specific minority group is gaining ground.

The fight for the prevention of genocide is a particularly sensitive issue to the Armenian people who suffered the first genocide of the 20th century with more than 1.5 million victims. The Armenian minority of the Ottoman Empire had long been experiencing discrimination at all levels of public life. Considered

second-class citizens, they were also subjected to political, social and cultural isolation, humiliation and specific restrictions, violence, deportation and even cases of massacre.

The Special Rapporteur Rita Izsak has rightly mentioned that many cases around the world demonstrate that minorities can be targets of criminal atrocities with impunity. The responsibility for crimes committed must be ensured in order to avoid new crimes being perpetrated. As the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said "Only then can we honor the memory of the victims of yesterday with dignity. Only this way can we save those who may be at risk tomorrow. "

This year, the Armenian population of the Syrian town of Kessab and neighboring villages, composed of descendants of survivors from the Armenian Genocide, has experienced renewed violence. Terrorist groups affiliated to Al Qaeda, freely crossed the border from the territory of neighboring Turkey, desecrated Armenian churches in Kessab and attacked the Armenian population of the city, leading to the evacuation of the population.

We all should combine our efforts to put in place effective mechanisms to protect minorities against criminal atrocities.

It should be constantly stressed that State authorities have the primary responsibility to protect populations from atrocious crimes. It was made clear during the World summit of 2005 that the international community must encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility, as well as to implement diplomatic, humanitarian and other appropriate measures to help protect threatened populations. Had the responsibility to protect been fully assumed, the number of victims of the Armenian Genocide and probably of other cases of genocides would not be so high.

I hope sincerely that these recommendations will bring understanding among us and I would like to ensure that Armenia will in turn keep making an effective and continuous contribution to international efforts in order to strengthen prevention mechanisms, but also to promote tolerance and dialogue between cultures.

