

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

I am speaking here on behalf of Armenian Catholicosate of Great House of Cilicia.

Armenians have been living in Middle East for centuries. I am Syrian Armenian and now you might recall the current images of my wounded country, instead of what used to be a peaceful nation with diverse but harmonized minorities.

Indeed, just like the Syrian people, minorities, including the Armenians, are suffering on a daily basis from crimes against humanity and severe violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law. The atrocities have reached unprecedented levels, where, for instance, even the remains of the Armenian Genocide victims, which were resting beneath the Armenian Church in Der Zor, were targeted when this church was blown up a few months ago. To be more specific, these atrocity crimes, committed mainly by cross-border foreign jihadists, are threatening the physical existence of Syria's minorities.

In this context, despite the current existence of an international coalition to combat terrorism in Syria and Iraq, there still are regional forces violating the international law by funding and supporting extremist armed groups, hence weakening the possibility of ending the crisis.

Subsequently, taking into account that all minorities have the basic right to existence and live in peace and security, we would like to emphasize the following draft recommendations:

- 1- We endorse draft recommendations no. 41 and 51 on the responsibility of States and non-state armed groups during armed conflicts to comply with international humanitarian and human rights laws and to ensure that the rights, security and basic needs of minorities are adequately protected. In this regard, the international community based on the principle of Responsibility to Protect has the duty not only to condemn the crimes committed by extremist groups but also to stop them, which is appropriately reflected in the Draft Recommendation no. 60.
- 2- Based on UN S.C. Resolutions 2133, 2161 on combating terrorism, we urge all states not to fund and support those armed groups who are committing atrocity crimes and targeting minorities. We therefore call for the insertion of the relevant recommendation in the Draft.
- 3- We believe in the fundamental role of religious leaders and youth initiatives to contribute to end ongoing conflicts, by calling to stop the violence and protect the minorities. Therefore we

support the draft recommendations no 31-33-55 and call for increased support for these initiatives by both State and non-State actors.

I thank you for your attention.