

**Statement by Mr. Gyorgy Tatar,**  
**President of the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities**  
**At the Seventh Session of the Human Rights Council Forum on Minority issues**  
**25 November 2014, Geneva**

Dear Chair,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My first words go to Ms. Rita Izsak, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. I thank her for her efforts and activities in setting the issue of mass atrocities on the agenda of the Minority Forum this year.

I wish also to thank the organizers of this event to provide the opportunity for the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities to share some of our ideas with you.

As I speak here today, millions of individuals worldwide, from the Hazaras in Afghanistan to the Ndebele in Zimbabwe, are in peril of atrocity crimes. They are threatened because they belong to a minority group. This phenomenon is particularly dangerous where the oppressing power is an extreme, non-state actor that is outside mainstream society and refuses to play by the rule of law. We also know that in some European countries hatred towards Roma, Muslim and Jews has increased. The international community must not overlook the contemporary challenges linked to migration and multiculturalism either. No country is, in fact, immune from targeted violence and conflicts.

Let me sum up my considerations in four points which will focus on some domains that may work as preventative tools in a longer run:

1. Application of Mass Atrocities lens

A study released by the Budapest Centre in 2013 on the capabilities of the European Union to prevent mass atrocities clearly pointed to the distinction between the prevention of violent conflicts and the prevention of mass atrocities. The document stressed that, given the specific nature of mass atrocities, we need to apply a

specific mass atrocities lens. This should be done from the very beginning while mapping root causes up to the very end of the conflict cycle when implementing responsive strategies.

We are aware of the fact that economic distress and poverty may exacerbate latent rigidities and push the “majority” to identify a scapegoat in the minority groups. This increases the exposure of minorities to mass atrocities and fuels conflict. It is fundamental, therefore, to also apply a mass atrocity lens when designing and implementing development policies, although we know that economic hardship per se is not the cause of ethnic tensions.

## 2. Dialogue - tool for prevention of mass atrocities

To some extent, we all belong to some sort of minority group based on the color of our skin, hair, eyes, habits, traditions, not to mention religion, political conviction and more. Potentially, we all may feel threatened by a majority. At the same time, each one of us also belongs to a majority group within the same society. That double personality which lies in each of us should be a stimulating perspective to develop empathy towards feelings, concerns and problems of those who are “other” and engage in dialogue with them.

In our understanding, dialogue is an effective tool for addressing the challenges of mass atrocities. Dialogues are inclusive processes which constitute framework for the members of any society, and enable the participants to act without distinction, listen to the others and be heard by the others. Such “safe spaces” foster mutual understanding, mutual learning and trust and raise our human relationships to a higher level of respect and tolerance. This genuine interaction paves the way for managing changes peacefully also in divided societies. Minorities need to take active part in the dialogue process not only to protect their interests but also to enrich the knowledge and experience of the majority.

The Budapest Centre encourages the international actors to build up skills and disseminate the practice of sustained dialogue and dialogue facilitation as a tool for both handling the root causes of the threats faced by minorities and addressing emerging contemporary challenges.

## 3. Significance of education

We believe that education about holocaust, genocide and other mass atrocity crimes and fundamental human rights is one of the best investments for effectively preventing mass atrocities. Therefore, we argue for increasing efforts in the field of education as a tool for properly shaping the mindset of generations to come. We deem vital to invest in activities aimed at elaborating specific curricula, methodologies and proper teaching material and encourage to more effectively disseminate the knowledge and best practices available in this field.

In numerous cases, majority and minority groups are educated and trained to mutual hate by fragments of biased history. Abused historical records and the “us and them” artificial dichotomy are passed from one generation to the next. For this reason, historians should be encouraged to explore the past, the root causes of tragedies and draw the lessons in close partnership with the representatives of minority groups. This approach would greatly help constructing collective social narratives and shared memories that can serve as solid basis for educating with one voice about mass atrocity crimes.

#### 4. Building national and regional capacities and capabilities

Building bridges between majority and minority groups requires a series of converging factors: skills, expertise, experience, deep knowledge of local dynamics, and trust in the process and in the actors taking part in it. Due to the specific nature of mass atrocity crimes we think that special attention should be devoted by the international actors to developing the specific national capabilities and capacities.

In our view, there is a lot of tasks in developing national and regional capacities, where the activities should be started by mapping the current state of affairs. We believe that it is vital to scrutinize the capabilities in judicial systems and legislation with the objective of setting shared norms and rules and regulation of law enforcement. We should cross-check our capacities to better counter hate speech and harmonize national activities. Further efforts are necessary for enhancing the whole of government approach, setting up single rules for mapping, and establishing special tracks in the decision making mechanisms. It is evident that the inclusion of minorities in all these activities should be considered as top priority.

It is of vital importance that the international organizations put the issues of minorities on their agenda from the angle of vulnerable groups and mass atrocities. That should considerably promote the preventive way of

thinking and further enhance the political will for action. Being in Geneva, I would suggest that the UN, together with competent regional organizations, such as the European Union, the African Union, the Council of Europe or the OSCE look into their possibilities to discuss these points in the foreseeable future.

I do know that several are the tools and domains for improving our preventive and responsive activities. Here today, I attempted to highlight only a few of them. International actors have the moral duty to apply all of them. Lacking responsiveness means being silent partners in massive human rights violence. That may not be an option. Thank you for your kind attention.