

## Seventh Forum on Minority Issues

**Statement by H.E. Ádám Zoltán KOVÁCS**  
**Deputy State Secretary for International Cooperation**  
**of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary**  
(Geneva, 25 November 2014)

Mr President,  
Ms Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Government of Hungary at this Seventh Forum on Minority Issues, which we consider as a unique and outstanding platform for exchange of best practices, discuss challenges, launch initiatives and formulate recommendations with regard to the protection of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Let me extend the highest appreciation of my Government to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office, the President of the Human Rights Council, and most particularly to the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and to all those who contributed to the organization of the Forum.

The Hungarian Government remains ***firmly committed to the cause of minority protection*** both in its internal and external policies. On the basis of its own historical experience, Hungary strongly believes that the promotion and protection of minority rights contribute “to political and social stability and peace” as it was universally recognized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. In our view minorities, whose individual and collective rights are safeguarded by law and assured by government authorities, accepted and tolerated by the majority of a society, are efficiently contributing both to the internal stability of a country and to its good neighbourly relations with others.

In this context we consider as of particular importance and actuality the choice of preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities as main topic of the Forum. Dramatic eruptions of violence in several parts of the world, resulting in serious and massive violations of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, mostly at the expense of and targeted against minorities, are calling for urgent steps towards practical implementation of the principles of the prevention and the responsibility to protect.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Hungary the protection of minorities has ***double layers***. In Hungary there are thirteen recognized national or ethnic minorities, while outside its borders, mostly in

the surrounding countries, there are more than two and half millions of ethnic Hungarians living as a national minority.

The protection of the rights of minorities in Hungary are guaranteed by the Fundamental Law (constitution), the cardinal Act on the Rights of Nationalities (minorities) and different other pieces of legislation, from which, regarding the topic of the Forum, the Criminal Code is of particular relevance.

While the Fundamental Law states that *minorities* (nationalities) living in Hungary *are constituent parts of the State*, the Cardinal Act on Nationalities *forbids all policies and practices* which persecute or intimidate a minority or individuals belonging to minority, or are aimed at the forced removal or relocation of a minority. This Act also provides for *firm action by Hungary in its international relations* against all political endeavours that may lead to violation of the rights of minorities, including by relying on the means afforded by international law and by virtue of international conventions.

The Criminal Code defines the *crimes against humanity* and the *crime of genocide*, stipulating that any person who commits such crimes with the aim of the destruction of a *national, ethnic, racial or religious group*, or who deprives other persons of their basic rights for reasons of their affiliation with such a group is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment between ten to twenty years or with life imprisonment. With regard to the crime of *incitement against a community* the Code stipulates that any person who publicly incites hatred against any *national, ethnic, racial or religious group* is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment up to three years.

All these legislative acts are ensuring a *solid legal basis to prevent* violence or atrocity crimes against minorities, *to protect* minorities internally and externally and also *to sanction* crimes committed against minorities or persons belonging to minorities on the motives of their affiliation.

On this legal basis the Hungarian Government introduced a *series of practical measures*, like enhancing victim support services, training programmes for the judiciary and law enforcement bodies. In parallel the Government declared a *zero tolerance policy* towards *anti-Semitism and anti-Roma attitudes*. Incidents of anti-Semitism have been promptly followed-up by highest-level official condemnations from Hungarian authorities or by legislative changes. Legislation has also been tightened regarding *paramilitary organizations*. The Government enforces this decision by penalizing participation in disbanded organizations as well as the use of non-official uniform-like clothing to avoid intimidation particularly of the Roma by paramilitary groups. A *hate-crime expert net* has been operated by The Hungarian National Police Force since 2012.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Minority protection continues to provide for a *pivotal element of the Hungarian foreign policy*. It has been one of the driving elements of Hungary's Euro-Atlantic integration endeavours, a key component of the establishment of good-neighbourly relations with surrounding countries through basic treaties, including the set-up of bilateral minority protection mechanisms in form of inter-governmental mixed committees on minority issues.

Promoting minority protection remains a priority area of Hungary's engagement in international and regional organisations. It is a key of Hungarian initiatives in the fields of prevention and responsibility to protect in the Human Rights Council and other UN fora. In this context, as a specific Hungarian contribution to international efforts, I would like to highlight the establishment of the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, as well as the Budapest Human Rights Forum which held its (also) seventh annual meeting in Budapest last week with two specific panels devoted respectively to prevention and responsibility to protect in the context of human rights and humanitarian law, as well as to the individual and collective rights of minorities.

Mr President,  
Ms Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Based on Hungary's long term engagement in and commitment to the promotion of the protection of minorities, I would like to express my country's full support to the draft recommendations to be adopted by the Forum on preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities. We are confident that once these recommendations are followed by the State and non-State actors, international and regional organizations, they can effectively contribute to the prevention, handling and settlement of violent conflicts targeting minority communities or persons belonging to minorities. My Government will be ready to cooperate and to exchange best practices with all interested partners in the advancement of this very important endeavour

Thank you for your kind attention!