



Check against delivery

Seventh session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues
which will
address the topic: “*Preventing and addressing
violence and
atrocity crimes targeted against minorities*”,
organized by the
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
under the
auspices of the Human Rights Council

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Mr. Neil Buhne

Director of the UNDP Geneva Liaison Office

Excellencies, President of the Human Rights Council, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues, Special Rapporteur, Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be here today and to speak on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the seventh annual Forum on Minority Issues. As the UN's development organisation with a presence in more than 170 countries and territories, our main mission is to achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. Respect for human rights is a sine qua non for societies to achieve those objectives, and to advance on the path towards higher levels of human development, peace and security.

Excellencies,

There is a recognition that burgeoning inequality within nations and persistent poverty exacerbate the marginalization of some groups specifically minority populations. The impact and negative consequences of long-standing and intersecting forms of discrimination, exclusion and denial of basic rights and fundamental freedoms of minorities in development processes is clearly recognized in our new Strategic Plan.

Our new Strategic Plan specifically outlines our continued commitment to ensure participation and voice in pursuit of equitable access to development opportunities and gains across populations, working with marginalized and minority groups, as agents of their own development. It further highlights the human rights-based approach to development programming as an engagement principle for UNDP.

Whilst implementing the HRBA can be a complex process, it has proven to be particularly effective in helping countries address the situation of marginalized minorities as it helps identify the root causes of inequalities and the multiple intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion that exist. This is precisely to prevent violence including atrocity crimes against minorities. Instead of regarding people as passive beneficiaries of State policies, the HRBA recognizes them as

active participants in their own development and as rights-holders, thereby placing “we the people” at the centre of the development process.

Complementing the HRBA, in 2014 UNDP has adopted Social and Environmental Standards, essentially a quality assurance mechanism at the planning stages of all our programming to ensure that all our interventions are protective of the environment and of people, the most vulnerable and marginalized minorities in particular. Human Rights are thus at the heart of these Environmental and Social Standards which will become operational as of January 01st 2015. Human Rights are at the cornerstone of our new Strategic Plan.

Excellencies,

As recognized by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Ms. Rita Izsak alongside efforts to address discrimination and ensure the realization of minority rights - good and inclusive governance are vital factors in preventing conflict, violence and atrocities against minorities. While violence can occur in any country, those in which there is a functioning democracy, good governance and the rule of

law have been found to be less likely to experience violence against specific communities.

UNDP through our country programmes implements interventions that aim at enhancing confidence and trust in governance institutions. Often jointly with our sister agencies, we work to promote an enabling environment with a view towards sustainability, including a major emphasis on national ownership.

Supporting policies and strengthening capacities for more effective and inclusive governance, to bring greater development benefits and increase the confidence and trust of minority populations in public institutions is a key area of support. We are looking forward to taking this work further with the SDGs and the post 2015. This includes our work supporting National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudsman offices as cornerstones of the national systems for promotion and protection of human rights –such as is taking place in Ukraine currently in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Development problems are fundamentally integrated and multidimensional and there is a wide expectation of action from UNDP and the UN system that builds resilience, tackles inequalities, and ensures inclusion and sustainability. For this purpose we are working more and more jointly, consolidating partnerships with OHCHR, UN Women, DPKO and

others to be more preventive and effective in protecting the more vulnerable in crisis settings. UNDP with DPKO are the co leads of the Global Focal Point arrangement for rule of law to be able to deliver justice and human rights more effectively and with further accountability in crisis and post-crisis settings.

UNDP plays a pivotal role in supporting overall efforts to enhance citizen security and the security of minorities by reinforcing the rule of law based on human rights principles and standards, and supporting reform of legal systems to address discrimination that impacts minorities. Improving community self-organization and participation particularly in local governance as the closest to populations, ensures more equitable access to services for minorities.

We also help create livelihood opportunities and advance community and social cohesion efforts between minority and majority communities such as is currently ongoing in Myanmar.

Excellencies,

With more countries moving towards democratic political systems and responding to growing public demand, the room for voice and participation has expanded

exponentially in certain spheres. At the same time we are often noting a shrinking space for some forms of engagement on the most sensitive issues which can affect minority populations. New models of engagement and voice are necessary to ensure the engagement of minorities and target improved service delivery.

We must continue to foster impartial ‘spaces’ for dialogue, agreement, coordination and action across organized groups and interests on major economic, social and governance reforms, reconciliation, and peace-building and ensure the active and meaningful participation of minorities in those ‘spaces’. Our partnerships with civil society have proven vital to advance that effort and to protect and promote the rights of minorities.

Lastly, UNDP as the main development partner of governments, has made specific and sustained efforts to ensure that the unique circumstances of minorities are embedded in its policy, programming, advocacy and capacity development initiatives.

Through our constructive partnership with the previous Independent Expert on Minority Issues, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, UNDP is offering more targeted, inclusive and

contextualized support to our programme countries and partners through the finalization of a Resource Guide and Toolkit on Marginalized Minorities in Development Programming. It reviews programming opportunities and relevant strategies for UNDP to integrate minorities in development including capacity development support for government officials and institutions, UN practitioners and minorities, as well as possible entry points for effective advocacy and partnership building efforts.

Our constructive partnership has led to our continued engagement at this UN Forum on Minority Issues and cements our cooperation with one of the critical UN Human Rights Council processes, also reinforced in the recently established UN Network on Racial Discrimination and the Protection on Minorities, as called for by the UN Secretary General.

Thank you for your attention.