

**Presentation by Ms Michele Klein-Solomon, Director of the Migrants in Crisis Initiative
(MICIC), International Migration Organisation (IOM)
9th session of the Forum on Minority Issues - ohchr**

24/25 November 2016

Unites Nations - Geneva

Thank you very much Mr Chairperson and Madam Special Rapporteur, the Secretariat, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. It is truly a pleasure and an honour to be here with you today; to have an opportunity to address the question of protection of minority rights in the context of humanitarian crises. The Chairperson introduced me recently served as the director of the Secretariat of Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative, which was a state led initiative but engaged international organisations, civil society organisations, private sector, to really look at the risks and vulnerabilities that migrants experience when crises occur; and to look at what can be done to reduce vulnerability enhance protection and promote solutions. The reason why this initiative is relevant to our discussion today is that in many respects migrants face similar challenges to ethnic religious and other minorities. And particularly the opportunity to look at three phases of a crisis: pre-crisis preparedness, actual crises response, and post-crises reconstruction and recovery in a way that ensures the inclusion of the risks, the vulnerabilities, the particularities of migrant population. I believe is directly analogous to the session that you are having here today. The reasons that the states and Migrants in Crisis Initiative was led by the governments of the Philippines and the US with a participation of a working group with six other governments, the several international organisations, several civil society organisations in the private sector. Because they saw that at this point that much like across the world that no country is immune to disasters, to natural disaster or conflict, in sum or whole of the country. And at the same time, often migrants or other forms of minority populations are not accounted for in disaster response planning. And while nationals, of course, and majority populations will be affected by crises situations minorities like migrants will experience additional barriers and vulnerabilities, because of their unique characteristics. In the case of migrants, which is also the case for many minority communities, they may face barriers because they may not speak the same language, they may face barriers because of culture and cultural comfort with the authorities and the willingness to come forward and identify themselves in a crises situation. Their legal status may create additional barriers to coming forward for protection in the systems. And as I said most importantly they are often simply not accounted for in disaster risk reduction and response mechanisms and their particular vulnerabilities and needs and barriers to access for protection are the kinds of things that motivated the need for this initiative. Many of you will remember the crisis in Libya 2011, which really shined the worlds attention on the fact that there were large migrant populations during that civil conflict. Nearly two million migrant workers were displaced as a result and because of the conflict they did not have access to normal means of protection including of their own governments from their own consulates. But of course crises are not limited to conflict affecting minority and migrants. But natural disasters also and while the vulnerabilities may be of a different character there are some that are quite the same. As a result, we undertook a very broad and inclusive set of consultation. Six regional consultations around the world. Inclusive consultations led by governments but with also the participation of civil society organisations,

the private sector, first responders, relevant international organisations, with a view towards identifying good practices and local mechanisms and responses that could be utilised potentially and learned from other regions of the world or even in the same regions and expand it to be adopted by others. The outcome, and I will turn to this very quickly, was a series of principles, core principles: obviously, saving lives first, ensuring non-discriminatory access to protection in the systems, provided targeted measures to overcome barriers, some key core principles [...], as well as guidelines. Guidelines that are addressed to the pre-crisis preparedness phase, to the actual emergency phase and to the post-crisis response and reconstruction phase much like what is being proposed here for minority populations. And we under-pinned those principles and guidelines with effective practices that were garnered from states and from civil society international organisations and very importantly from the private sector around the world. And created a repository with over 300 good practices with the idea that from learning from the ground-up we could share good responses and do a better job collectively for protection and assistance. I won't go into details now in the interest of time. I am happy to share with you and make available to you those guidelines as well as particularly the online repository of practices because of course there are some minority populations that are also migrant populations, and in particular I am thinking here of pastoralists and nomadic populations; but of course, other ethnic minorities and religious minorities. So I do believe there are things that can be imported from the work that we did with respect to migrants that are of direct relevance to your work here. And would encourage of thinking about solutions and inclusive approach that brings in civil society, private sector, civil protection actors and more. Thank you very much for your time.