



*Permanent Mission of Italy to the  
International Organizations in Geneva*

Forum on Minority Issues  
Ninth Session

Item 4: Protecting minority rights during humanitarian crises

**Statement of Italy**  
25 November 2016

*Thank you, Mr President,*

Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the EU.

- We consider very appropriate and timely the choice to develop, during this Forum, the issue of the protection of minorities in humanitarian crises, as minorities are among the most vulnerable groups when such crises occur. Italy has been deeply committed in those years to raise the attention of the international community in this regard.
- The protection of minorities in humanitarian crises requires a multidimensional response, not only political, but also of immediate assistance on the ground, to meet the most urgent needs, with a medium-term vision, allowing the coexistence of minorities in the post-conflict phase. States and those who have institutional responsibilities and in civil society must encourage and promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Education for diversity is an important antidote to the seeds of intolerance and violent extremism.
- On the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul last May, Italy stressed the importance of involving religious organizations in humanitarian action. They often have access to areas unreachable for the international community and their contribution can be decisive for the delivery of aid to the besieged and isolated areas.
- The protection of cultural and religious heritage is an essential element for the protection of freedom of religion or belief and rights of ethnic and religious minorities. We support UNESCO's initiatives for the protection of cultural heritage in areas of crisis and we have provided the support of an "Italian Task Force" that involves Carabinieri officers.
- As regards engagement on the ground, we also wish to underline the support of the Italian cooperation to the work of UNICEF in Iraq in assisting girls, mostly minors, belonging to the Yazidi minority, freed after being kidnapped by Daesh.

Thank you.