

9th session of the Forum on Minorities Issues
„Minorities in situations of humanitarian crises“
Geneva, 24-25 November 2016

Intervention
by
MONTENEGRO

Mr. President,

As this is a unique opportunity to discuss the impact of humanitarian crises on minorities, Montenegro would like to underline one of the Special Rapporteur's key note that Governments and humanitarian actors have an obligation to ensure that all strategies and assistance provided meet the specific needs of minorities and promote their full equality before the law.

We do believe that it is extremely important to stress the responsibility of all stakeholders, in particular States, in ensuring that minorities are not further marginalised or discriminated against before, during or after any humanitarian crisis. Thus, in providing adequate humanitarian assistance human rights based approach must be secured.

Although being a small country that managed to preserve peace, multi-ethnic and multi-religious harmony during dissolution of former Yugoslavia, Montenegro fully opened up its borders during 1990s, providing a home to more than 130,000 refugees belonging to different national, ethnic or religious groups, which at one moment made up one fifth of population of Montenegro. Out of this number, almost ten thousands of internally displaced people were Roma and many of them came without documentation. As of the moment they entered the country, necessary humanitarian assistance and all other services, in particular housing, health and education, were provided to them. And we worked together with national Red Cross, civil society, UNHCR, UNICEF and many other stakeholders.

Still, after almost two decades, we have not managed to close this chapter, although the permanent resolving of the issue of displacement and ensuring durable solutions has been one of our main priorities. This issue has been addressed through the development of the legal and strategic framework, as well as through implementing regional approach which included inevitable and extremely important cooperation with the countries of origin. Activities at all times have included respect, protection and fulfilment of minority rights as essential in the work of the national institutions for ensuring their full integration into Montenegrin society.

Mr. President,

In line with above said, in order to ensure promotion and protection of minorities' rights we must invest in building inclusive societies that will enable active participation of minorities in political, economic and cultural life as well as that needs of minorities are

properly addressed. Ensuring life without fear should be an imperative for all stakeholders and therefore we would like to underline the importance of international cooperation and proper guidelines in this regard.

Thank you.