

**FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES**  
**11TH SESSION, 29-30 NOVEMBER 2018**  
**UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA SWITZERLAND**

*Joint Statement on Agenda Item No. Item 3: Statelessness resulting from conflicts, forced population movements and migration affecting minorities: main challenges and possible solutions*

Madam Chair, we are speaking on behalf of our 40 colleagues from 36 countries who are currently participating in the **2018 OHCHR Minorities Fellowship Programme**.

From the outset, we would like to congratulate you Madam Chair for your election as the Chairperson of this Forum. As a former fellow yourself and one of the pioneers of the Programme, we look up to you and we thank you for paving the way for us and for the next generation of minority rights defenders to the UN. We are also equally delighted to see many of our former fellows in the room today, invited as panelist and participants.

Madam Chair, the issue of statelessness seems like a farfetched issue to some and limited in scope when one talks about minority rights in its broadest sense. However, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, we are reminded to "leave no one behind" and to "endeavor to reach the furthest behind first".

Through sharing of experiences since we arrived in Geneva for the past 4 weeks, we realized that discrimination; place of residence; socio-economic status; governance; and vulnerability to crisis or risk are the key factors that usually led certain communities being left behind. Within our own communities, stateless members are the most at risk and they experience multiple forms marginalization and exclusion due.

Madam Chair, today, we stand in solidarity with our 2 former fellows and 1 current fellow who will be sharing their personal stories in the Forum as panelists. We are equally delighted to see several of our former fellows combating discrimination & preventing statelessness in their countries.

Now offered in English, Russian and Arabic; for 4 weeks, the Fellowship Programme is currently the most comprehensive training programme in the UN system, specifically tailored for minority rights defenders, including Stateless person. The programme afforded participants an in-depth and experiential learning on the UN system, its core international human rights instruments and mechanisms.

Madam Chair, in light of this information, we would like to recommend that this Programme should grow along with the mounting interest of minorities.

- We recommend to OHCHR the strengthening of the national and regional components of the Programme to accommodate the capacity building needs of minorities and at the same time, provide a preparatory training course to ensure that the content of the programme is closer to their realities on the ground.
- We recommend to the UN system in general, and to the UN Country Teams in particular, to tap former fellows as resource in their work, on minority issues at the country, regional and international levels.

Madam Chair, allow us to thank sincerely the following partners and supporters of the Programme: The Governments of Austria, Norway, The Russian Federation, Switzerland, Mexico and Slovenia for their financial generosity and substantive support, including other UN agencies such as UNESCO and UNHCR

and several Geneva –based NGOs who extended their valuable expertise to us, and to the Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI) for making our stay in Geneva smoothly and conveniently as possible.

Finally, we would like to extend an invitation to everyone to our side event tomorrow, **Friday, 30 November from 13h00 -15h00 in Room XXIII** on “enhance participation of minorities in the UN processes” by establishing a UN Voluntary Fund for Minorities, launching the Global Minority Caucus, among others.

Thank you Madam Chair.