



Geneva, 28 November 2019 Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Medhat Klada. I hold the position of the President of the Union of the Coptic Organizations in Europe. I also represent the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt. I would like to thank you for choosing the topic of this year as "Education and the Language of Minorities" and how women and females within such minority can be given the chance to be educated. Mr. President, this is an ideal topic. In my capacity as the representative of the Egyptian Copts, who constitute an ethnic and religious minority, constituting somewhere between 15 and 20% of total population, i.e. approximately somewhere between 15 to 20 million person, out of a total population of 100 million. Such minority used to speak the Coptic language even after the Arab's invasion in the seventh century, when the Arab rulers banned its use in the government entities and offices and thereafter the Arab rulers have ultimately banned its use in communication in the seventh century in public offices within the government entities. Thereafter it was ultimately banned in its use in communication in the tenth century. The matter reached cutting tongues of those who used to communicate in the Coptic language. However, we are still using it in our Coptic Churches and in our prayers. Mr. President, Egypt is still a poor country and is suffering from crushing dilemmas, most important of which is the educational budget. Notwithstanding that, the government budget is allocating 13 billion Egyptian Pounds every year for financing the Islamic University, which recruits students from other countries. Its curriculum is not limited to religious education but it includes civil sciences education, such as medicine, engineering, agricultural sciences and trading businesses. Coptic Christian students are absolutely banned from enrolment in such university. This also applies to civil science colleges, notwithstanding that the University is financed from taxes that taxpayers are paying, most of whom are Coptic Christians. Regrettably, such University which (considers all other languages insane, disbelief and atheism, and that all such languages will not survive except Arabic, as declared by Al-Azhar Sheikh), constitutes the source of radical extremism in the whole world. The terrorist Omar Abdul Rahman and the leader of boko haram graduated therefrom, as well as Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Mr. President, We have been participating in this forum since more than seven years. Regrettably, we have not seen any practical change on the ground in respect of the discrimination against Egyptian Copts. In fact, it has even worsened under the current rule of President El-Sissi. There are 52 Nos. Coptic churches that are locked up, only in the Governorate of Minia, which is situated 220 kilometers south of the capital of Egypt. Moreover, there are court cases in respect of blasphemy against Islam. The rate of filing of such has drastically increased against whoever calls for equality among both Muslims and Christians. Examples are Khalid Montasser, Fatima Na'out, Nabil Al-Nakeeb and others. There is not one single Copt employed in State Security Department, State Intelligence Department, or as Director of Security in any governorate, or State Police, or as Head of Obstetrics and Gynecology Department in any medical college, all because of a religious order by issued Al-Azhar, which banned Christian Copts from holding any such positions. As such, we are calling upon the Egyptian Government, to: First, encourage and promote teaching of the Coptic Language in its schools and in the Egyptian universities, on the ground that it was one of the spoken languages of a large percentage of the Egyptian population, which should be enjoying more support. Secondly, that civil colleges should not be allowed under the umbrella of Al-Azhar University. Examples are Medical Colleges, Engineering, Commerce and others. Al-Azhar University should be restricted only to Islamic religious education. Its budget should be limited to charity donations given by Muslims only. Thirdly: Taking legislative and administrative actions, as necessary, in respect of the matter of a parent converts to Islam and subsequent damages inflicted upon the child, forcing him to become a Muslim and to learn Islamic religion without his consent. This violates the Child Rights Convention. Finally, UNESCO Organization noticed that persons who belong to minorities are facing difficulties in respect of education. The said Organization supported Egypt in respect of taking action against discrimination and allowing marginalized groups to join public education.

Thank you for your kind attention. Medhat Klada