

Thank you Mr./Madam Chair,

And thanks the office of the High Commissioner for the giving me the chance to be with you today.

Ladies and gentlemen. My seven year old son, Saleh asked me, a just few weeks ago, a very simple question to which I had no answer. He asked why did he not study the Tamahaq language in his school while we encouraged him to speak it at home.

Madam chair, I am a proud Libyan. I have two children; Saleh and Nader. Their message and that of many Tuareg children to you, the Libyan government and international community is simple: they want to grow up as proud Libyan Tuaregs like their parents, but they are losing their language and culture. They have the right to learn their mother tongue at school like other Libyans because our constitution identifies it as **a collective Libyan heritage**.

Because of past and present policies of assimilation and lack of recognition, our language is disappearing, and will disappear completely if no serious measures are taken urgently to protect, promote and revive it. Tamahaq is “definitely endangered”, according to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.

Madam chair, on a related education issue, I work with children of Libyan women who are married to foreigners. The government allowed them to attend school this year for free. While we encourage such positive steps, we call on the government to take more advanced measures on the issue of permanent access to free state education. **In my hometown of Ghat, 2000 children struggle to access school for many reasons including statelessness.**

Therefore, my recommendations to the Libyan government are:

1. Include the Tamahaq language in the education system.
2. Protect and preserve indigenous languages in Libya.
3. Guarantee the rights of children of Libyan women who are married to foreigners like access to free state education, and work.

Thank you