



EUROPEAN UNION

Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office
and other international organisations in Geneva

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Forum on Minority Issues 2021

2nd and 3rd December 2021

EU Intervention

Madam Chairperson,

The EU welcomes this timely debate given the frequency and severity of conflicts involving persons belonging to minorities and their often tragic consequences, which affect society as a whole. Indeed, the strength and resilience of states is reflected in the protection of its persons belonging to minorities.

The EU fully aligns with the premise that the full realization of the human rights of persons belonging to minorities in accordance with international law and standards results in a greater sense of social cohesion and solidarity and is key for effective prevention of conflicts and ensuring of long-term stability. In this context, the EU recalls the principles and rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

States must intensify their commitment to “leave no one behind”, including by addressing multiple, aggravated and intersecting forms of discrimination and eradicating any incitement to hatred against persons belonging to minorities. Essential is also their full inclusion, meaningful and effective participation in conflict prevention and conflict analysis, as well as their representation at all levels of decision-making.

Violence against persons belonging to minorities occurs in many forms, and often starts with words. The EU continues to combat and prevent hate crime and hate speech and support its victims through monitoring, preventing, and countering this online and offline, as well as fostering tolerance and mutual respect through interreligious and intercultural activities. The EU Code of Conduct on countering hate speech online together with the forthcoming EU Digital Services Act will provide strong regulatory tools to fight against and prevent hate speech online, including such targeting persons belonging to minorities.

In implementing the EU legislation, the EU Member States can rely on support and expertise of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), which for instance provides useful data on issues of racism and hate crime. FRA also created a *Fundamental Rights Platform* and an interactive web-forum to facilitate the exchange of information between the agency and civil society.

Furthermore, the EU is using its entire toolbox to engage in the whole spectrum of mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes involving persons belonging to minorities, and supports local human rights mechanisms, as well as conflict prevention ones. Rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and other minorities are also a firm part of EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

In view of the upcoming 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to minorities next year, the EU is looking forward to reaffirming our joint commitment to its full implementation.

I thank you.