



Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

## **Forum on Minority Issues**

### **Fourteenth session**

#### **Focusing on the rights of minorities and effective prevention of conflicts**

**2-3 December 2021**

#### **Statement by Finland**

Madame Chair,

Finland fully aligns itself with the EU statement and welcomes this timely panel discussion.

The UN Declaration provides important framework for further promotion, protection and realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for minorities. Having minorities included in planning, decision-making and implementation processes is a prerequisite for sustainable, peaceful development of societies. Equal participation of minorities at all levels of society and ensuring non-discrimination, is an effective tool in preventing conflicts. In addition the meaningful participation of women, girls and youth should be safeguarded at all levels.

We must adopt measures to address racial and ethnic stereotypes. One of the growing problems is xenophobia and hate speech, which can be used to restrict freedom of expression, it reduces the sense of engagement, increases polarization in societies and, in the worst case, threatens the rule of law and democracy. Persons belonging to minorities, especially women, are often targeted by hate speech both offline and online. Minorities within minorities are in a particularly vulnerable situation, like sexual and gender minorities with an immigrant background.

Finally, Mme Chair, Finland would like to highlight tolerance as an important element in preventing conflicts. The Freedom Online Coalition that Finland currently chairs stresses the promotion of safe and inclusive digital space for all. Everyone in every minority should be able to use their voices online without threat of online violence, harassment as well as hate speech. This is a way to prevent conflicts and we all need to engage.

Thank you.