

Good afternoon,

It is a real pleasure to brief this panel today. Before I present an example of minorities' engagement in conflict prevention, I would like to explain the specific conflict context in which we intervened briefly.

Mbororo is a predominantly nomadic group, which is said to have arrived in Cameroon at the beginning of the 20th century. This minority group, composed primarily of Muslim pastoralists, settled in northern Cameroon before transitioning to more fertile lands in the Grassland of Western Cameroon. Historically, their presence has led to tensions with indigenous Grassfields communities, particularly over land issues. However, these local conflicts increased exponentially with the outbreak of the conflict in the North-West and South-West regions. In 2017, non-state armed groups declared the independence of these two English-speaking regions. In the North-West region, non-state armed groups routinely target Mbororo communities, either to steal their cattle or in retaliatory raids for alleged attacks against local communities. The situation has led to a vicious circle of attacks and retaliatory raids.

Against this background, the UN sought to work with the Association for the Wellbeing of Women and Indigenous People, a women-led and mbororo-led civil society organization working primarily to empower local communities especially women and young girls, and promote and advocate for sexual reproductive health education and a healthy environment for Indigenous people. With financial support from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNESCO provided technical advice to ASSOWWIP to strengthen youth-led early warning and response. The project followed an inclusive approach to establish youth clubs as spaces for dialogue among and across communities. The project also built local mediation capacity through training of trainers, ensuring the availability of community mediators with the ability to work with customary authorities and religious leaders to prevent and address conflicts. Finally, ASSOWWIP supported intra and inter-communal dialogue sessions, bringing together traditional and religious leaders, community members, especially youth and women, and interest groups such as farmers associations members and local government. These sessions contributed to an increased understanding among Mbororo and indigenous communities and bring practical solutions to land use issues.

As a peacebuilder, this project is particularly significant. From a prevention perspective, the project address often “invisible” issues at the intersection of center-periphery dynamics with grassroot ones. It also heavily relies on strengthening community capacity to prevent and address conflict. Moreover, it brings to the forefront women and youth leadership in mediation in a patriarchal society. Finally, it fostered civil society cooperation across communal divides.

However, and I would like to end by offering some food for thought for further discussion, the project did not come organically. First, the demand from ASSOWWIP was initially met with skepticism and took the leadership of the Resident Coordinator to come to fruition. It signals the need to ensure a minority lens in our conflict analysis work, to better understand grassroots dynamics and actors, including minority actors, and deconstruct stereotypes attached to the capacity and objectivity of minority actors. Moreover, taking the risk to support the work of minority organizations – amplifying their voices and giving them the

space – both financial and political – to do their work yields a significant impact, to promote respect for minorities and to ensure that minorities are able to stand up for their right