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**Fourteenth Session of the United Nations**

**Forum on Minority Issues**

***“Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights of minorities”***



**Statement by H.E. Nazhat Shameem Khan**

**President of the Human Rights Council**

**Geneva, 2 December 2021**

**10:00-10:30**

**Room XX, Palais des Nations**

**Fourteenth Session on Minority Issues: “*Conflict Prevention and the  
Protection of the Human Rights of minorities*”**

**H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan**

**2 December 2021 10h00-10h30**

Madam Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates and participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula vinaka and good day.

It is my great honour to open this fourteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues on the theme of “*Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights of Minorities*”.

At the outset, I would like to welcome everyone and express my sincere thanks for all of your flexibility for participating in this Forum via a hybrid platform. Unfortunately, the current health situation in Geneva, and the accompanying restrictions, are preventing us from holding a fully in-person meeting as originally planned. I am certain, however, that this will not prevent participants from having rich interactions, and I do look forward to the discussions.

If I may, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome and congratulate Ms. Victoria Donda who has kindly accepted the important task of chairing this session of the Forum. Ms. Donda brings with her a wealth of experience in the field of minority issues, including as the president of the Argentinian National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, and will undoubtedly lead this Forum and all participants.

I also wish to welcome Mr. Fernand de Varennes, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and thank him for his longstanding work in guiding the important Forum and preparing its annual sessions.

And finally, I would like to welcome all participants – representatives of Member States, United Nations specialized agencies, human rights mechanisms and bodies, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations, academics and experts.

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This Forum is a unique venue to reflect on issues pertaining to the enjoyment of all human rights by minorities through dialogue and cooperation between all stakeholders. The theme of this Forum, conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities, could not be timelier. Indeed, over the past decade conflicts across the globe have increased dramatically, and within affected communities minority groups are often the most vulnerable, overlooked and neglected in times of crises.

As President of the Human Rights Council I would like to take a moment to highlight that the Council has taken significant action to ensure that human rights and minority issues remain firmly on the Council's agenda, all of which can enrich the discussions occurring today.

Indeed, the Council has ensured the continuation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues who is tasked with, *inter alia*, promoting the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, examining ways to overcome existing obstacles to the full and effective realization of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and identify best practices and possible for technical cooperation with the OHCHR, at the request of governments, on this issue. In addition, the Council established, through Council decision 24/118, a Special Fund that supports the participation of civil society in a number of Forums, when health restrictions allow, including this one.

Finally, the Council established this Forum in 2007 to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. And, since its establishment, the UN Forum on Minority

Issues has played an essential role in promoting minority rights as contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. For example, the Forum produces valuable guidance to human rights actors at the international, regional and national levels through a set of action-oriented recommendations, which are presented to the Council annually by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

In this connection, I wish to emphasise that we have the opportunity, over the next two days, to actively contribute to this set of recommendations and build on the recommendations produced by the Forum at its previous sessions. I encourage you all to seize this opportunity to contribute to the promotion and protection of the human rights of minorities.

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Human Rights Council to protect the rights and lives of all individuals who cooperate with the United Nations and its mechanisms in the field of human rights.

The Council condemns any and all acts of intimidation or reprisal against such individuals and groups and I count on your cooperation in this important collective endeavour to make sure that all those who dare to speak, to raise alarm and to bravely defend the rights of their communities, are able to do so without any risk to themselves or to their communities.

I wish you all a fruitful, constructive and inter-active dialogue over the next two days and another successful Forum on Minority Issues.

Vinaka vakalevu and I Thank you.