

15th Forum on Minority Issues
Panel 1 - Review: normative frameworks and the mainstreaming of the
Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic,
Religious and Linguistic Minorities at the United Nations

1 December 2022

Statement by Austria

Thank you, Chair,

We thank the OHCHR Secretariat for organising this year's minority forum and particularly welcome the focus on the 30th anniversary of the Declaration. Not only because it is an important moment to evaluate the situation of minorities and their rights, but also because Austrian diplomats played an important role in initiating the UN Declaration.

To this day, the Declaration is the only comprehensive global document setting out the rights of persons belonging to minorities. It recognizes that promotion of minority rights contributes to political and social stability. One of the earliest indicators of violence and conflict is chronic disregard for minority rights. All too often, minorities are instrumentalised by one side or the other. Their situation even misused as a pretext for war. We see another striking example of this in Europe today.

Austria has benefitted directly from its active support for minority rights in its own learning process. Today, for example, the autonomy of South Tyrol is a model for the successful realization of minority rights. Frank discussions of past injustices, and the careful exercise of Austria's protective function have been indispensable for this positive outcome.

Therefore, Austria has placed the promotion and protection of minority rights at the centre of its human rights agenda:

- At the domestic level, we have taken specific measures to support national autochthonous minorities, including in education, language, culture and media. Last year, we doubled our annual financial support.
- At the international level, Austria traditionally initiates resolutions in the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly and actively supports the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and this Forum.

Before closing Austria would like to contribute the following to the Forum's recommendations:

That the 2008 OSCE Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State relations be revisited to provide normative and practical guidance on the global level on the prevention and settlement of disputes involving minorities.

Thank you.