

Mr. Chairman. Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished participants, and colleagues,

Every ecosystem, whether on land or in the ocean, requires a diverse range of plants, animals, and organisms to exist. The natural world shows us, that we need diversity in order to survive and thrive.

Therefore, it stands to reason that we too require diversity in our societies.

We know how much diversity enriches societies and individuals by bringing together different experiences and providing new perspectives.

Yet throughout history, there have been attempts to uproot the very differences that have caused our world to flourish.

30 years ago, at a time when ethnic tensions and nationalistic tendencies were on the rise in many parts of the world, it was critical to recognise the importance of protecting minorities, particularly by adopting the Declaration on Minority Rights.

Member States committed to implementing measures for the effective protection of the human rights of persons that belong to national, ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities.

And of course, we have seen progress over the years, but we cannot rest on our laurels. Much more needs to be done to address existing and new challenges that arise.

When it comes to minority protection, as well as its interaction with peace, security, and sustainable development, human rights standards are the answer.

We also recognise that minority protection issues have at times been instrumentalized for political gain and to justify violent conflict. This should not be the case.

To address minority issues, I would like to highlight three areas:

First, we have seen a significant rise in hate speech that is directed at minorities on social media. We know that human rights defenders, in particular women human rights defenders and minority rights advocates, are increasingly subjected to online and offline harassment and intimidation. Adopting and implementing strong policies to combat hate speech, as well as regulations on the functioning of social media, would make a significant difference in the lives of minorities.

I made this point in my open letter to Elon Musk about Twitter. I set out the human rights standards that need to be implemented on social media platforms.

Second, serious violations of minority rights continue to be at the heart of many violent conflicts. We are witnessing an increase in tensions around the world with ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic differences being used for political gain.

History teaches us lessons. We know that past genocides demonstrate the dangers of hate speech that is directed at minorities. We must decisively address exclusion, hostility, and violence. This requires political will at different levels. The 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Minority Rights provides an important opportunity to reaffirm our commitments and build new momentum.

We need concerted efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of protecting minority rights as an effective means of conflict prevention.

My third observation is one close to my heart, as I worked on it extensively in my previous positions. It is the issue of statelessness and nationality, which is closely connected to minority rights issues.

Discrimination based on minority status is often a leading cause of statelessness. For example, the Rohingya minority group in Myanmar has faced statelessness for decades.

More than 75% of the world's known stateless populations are members of minority groups. Minorities and other disadvantaged groups face additional challenges as a result of statelessness. In particular, women are further marginalised by gender-based discrimination in the acquisition, change, or retention of nationality. There are also a number of countries that do not allow women to confer their nationality on their children. This is especially troubling given how important nationality is to the full and equal exercise of fundamental human rights.

So in short, human rights provide not just guidance but also an important blueprint for everyone, including governments, to address longstanding discrimination issues through meaningful partnerships with affected communities.

The 30th anniversary of the Declaration is really an ideal opportunity for us to review, rethink, and reform how we can create a better and more inclusive world for everyone.