

Item 2 : Rethink

Number 56 : European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network, Brussels

Madam/mister moderator,
Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for allowing me to make a contribution as Director of the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network and also as a Roma woman activist.

Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent are present across the globe and include a global population of Roma people.

Despite varying levels of success, in Europe and particularly in the European Union, Roma communities now have considerable instruments and consultation mechanisms at their disposal. In stark comparison, UN special procedures and treaty body provisions are much weaker and often lack real enforcement mechanisms.

I want to recognise the submission of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Rights to the General Assembly in 2020 stating that the term “ethnic minorities” includes descent-based discrimination. However, current provisions do not address the hierarchical discrimination Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent face which include complex hierarchical social structures and cultural aspects of oppression.

I therefore state that current provisions and also definitions of minorities are insufficient and do not adequately encompass the experience of the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent and recommend:

The establishment of a working group to examine the gaps in protection for Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, not just the norms but also the wider issues.

Alternatively, independent Experts should be appointed following the recent example used in the Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality which appointed 3 experts with country visits and a report.

My second recommendation is to establish a UN International year on the Rights of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent to allow focused and sustained attention on the topic.

I also appeal to member states to support us to pass a resolution recognising the unique discriminatory practices affecting all Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent.

I thank you.