



Permanent Mission of the I. R. of Afghanistan to UNOG

2 December 2022: Fifteenth Session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues

Thank you Chair,

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country. This Forum on Minority Issues comes at a critical time when numerically smaller communities across Afghanistan are under constant threat, denied their basic rights on the basis of ethnic and religious identity.

First, we extend our deepest sympathies to the families of the victims - who were students - in a bombing this Wednesday of a religious school, in Samangan province, a majority ethnic Uzbek populated region. In September, a similar blast on an education centre in Kabul resulted in the deaths of over 45 young Hazara girl students. Attacks on ethnic and religious minorities, their places of residence, worship, and education reflect crimes against humanity. Millions are at risk of genocide. Cultural heritage is being destroyed and language erased.

Afghanistan is also culturally diverse, beside sunni Muslims home to Shias, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Christians, among others who have long been the target of the Taliban and other terrorist groups. Since the illegal takeover of the country, systematic attacks - motivated by intolerance, hatred, and extremist ideology - along with mass forced displacement have reached unprecedented levels. Members of the Sikh, Hindu, and Jewish communities have fled the country in fear for their lives. Further, the Taliban has banished the participation of women in public life and banned girls from receiving primary education.

We echo the remarks of the Secretary-General at the High-Level Meeting on the 30th Anniversary of the Adoption of the UN Declaration on Minority Rights: “We are not dealing with gaps – we are dealing with outright inaction and negligence in the protection of minority rights.”

The devastating situation for minority communities in Afghanistan is a direct result of this inaction and negligence. Far from implementing the Declaration, the Taliban has not only failed to protect them, but is also an active participant in their institutionalized discrimination, suppression, and exclusion. We cannot achieve sustainable peace and stability in the country at the cost of its ethnic and religious minorities.

Recommendations:

- As violations remain unabated with impunity, we reiterate our call for the immediate establishment of an independent investigative mechanism by the Council to ensure

effective, thorough investigations are carried out, complementary to the work of the ICC.

- To ensure the protection of minority rights, we further call for support for the establishment of an inclusive, representative government, including with regard to all ethnic and religious minorities.
- Finally, we recommend withholding international aid from States who fail to protect the rights of minorities and conditional development aid contingent on whether States protect such rights in line with article 5 of the Declaration.

Mr. Chairperson, I thank you!