

4th Meeting, 14th session of the Forum on Minority Issues.

Victoria Donda:

Many situations of injustice were denounced in these intense two days of debate and proposals. I will not list them. We took note of the situations that were reported and of many of the proposals that the participants were expressing. We also took note of the considerations of the experts.

Some of the things we wanted to say in closing this forum are, firstly, that we are convinced that discrimination and racism are not, as we said at the beginning of this forum, a problem of minorities and majorities, but of inequality in the access to and exercise of power. We believe that this is fundamental, because otherwise we can understand that discrimination and racism are either individual behaviours or almost anecdotal behaviours in the life and history of people. And the truth is that both behaviours, which are violent behaviours and which lead to the unhappiness for our people and societies, are behaviours carried out by minorities that hold power. Racism and discrimination are nothing but a form of violence. Only this violence can be exercised from power and, therefore, the challenge for us is working out how to democratise this power.

For us, an important part of thinking about this is to rethink ourselves, to modify these paradigms, to talk, not about multiculturalism but about interculturalism. It is to speak from an intersectoral perspective, it is to speak from a gender perspective.

Why do we say intersectoral and gender perspective are necessary to change the paradigms in which we live these situations of violence in different parts of the world? If we don't

have the sensitivity to see that it is women who have the hardest time in crisis situations, we don't have the capacity to see how we can solve it. And why do I say this? The Special Rapporteur and many other experts and participants spoke about improving tools to address situations of violence, discrimination and racism. In order to improve these tools, a fundamental voice is needed, not only from the organisations and activists who have been fighting against this for a long time. The fundamental missing voice is that of the victims. If member states do not listen to the victims of these situations, there will be a part of the problem that we will never be able to solve.

We do not come here to give lessons to every one of our countries and I do not want to be self-referential. But the reality is that I come from a country that can prove that paradigms have been changed. If states do not dialogue with victims, and victims do not take responsibility for designing state policies together with the state to change realities, there is a voice that we do not listen to. Part of preventing conflict has to do with including victims in the way we build power within our communities.

We don't want to give lessons, I just want to tell a partial reality of a place in this world: Argentina. Argentina in the 1970s experienced a dictatorship that left us with disappeared people and many appropriated children. I was one of the children born in a concentration camp in our country. I am a victim of a violent situation, a situation of discrimination, committed by the Argentinean state. But, I am a member of the Argentinean state today because I understand, along with many others like me, that it is only by designing public policies that we can prevent in the future this type of genocide like the one we are experiencing in our country. I want to emphasise this, because I think it is important for peace to be lasting and, above all, so that these

victims can, as we said at the beginning, show in the future how we can resolve the conflicts that arise.

Designing state policies is fundamental to prevent conflicts and different forms of violence; violence that manifests itself in discrimination, segregation and racism; violence that manifests itself in different ways; violence that manifests itself because we live with an almost uniform common sense that leads us to think, or rather not to think; not to think how illusory it is in a world like the one we live in, where in one place in the world you sneeze and in another place in the world you get a disease at almost the same time, to think that if we leave a sector or a region in the world short-handed, then that will end up affecting us. We cannot think that without solidarity, without dialogue, without interculturalism we will prevent any conflict. This is absolutely necessary.

I was talking about Gramsci. Gramsci said that common sense is a product of history. Our history teaches us that only if we are all together we can transform it, transform it for the better because we have to improve the life of every one of our people, thank you very much.

I will end the meeting, thank you very much, thank you all for your kind attendance.