

**Intervention by the Association for the Promotion of the French Language in Flanders (APFF)
and the Association for the Promotion of Human Rights and Minorities (ADHUM)
at the 15th Minorities Forum**

**Reviewing, rethinking and reforming: thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of the
United Nations on minorities' rights**

Geneva, 1-2 December 2022

Mister President,

The Association for the Promotion of the French Language in Flanders (APFF) and the Association for the Promotion of Human Rights and Minorities (ADHUM) would like to draw your attention to the lack of protection for the 310,000 French-speakers who live in Flanders.

- After 21 years of having signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Belgium has still not ratified it.

- After 15 years of having adopted the 2007 anti-discrimination laws, Belgium has still not appointed the competent body tasked with combating linguistic discrimination.

In fact, Flanders does not wish to hear about the French-speaking minority in its territory. It is systematically opposed to any measure which would allow the French-speakers of Flanders to defend their rights.

Faced with this situation, the role of civil society, and more particularly of the representatives of minorities, is essential, both in the development of reports for human rights mechanisms and in the follow-up of recommendations.

If Belgium does not miss an opportunity to say that the participation of civil society is an essential priority, in the field, the reality is very different.

Let's remember that the UN believes that: *"Recognition of minority status is not the sole decision of the State. (...) Self-identification must be respected (...) Civil society and minority groups must be involved in the entire process."*

Many countries have created measures to ensure maximum transparency in the drafting of their reports: putting projects online; large-scale consultations; and detailed publications of civil society's observations, which is what is done in Switzerland and Canada.

In Belgium, civil society is not listened to enough. Its role is most often limited to cautioning reports which are exclusively drafted in an internal manner.

That is why the APFF and the ADHUM rely on the UN to ensure that civil society and the representatives of minorities are consulted as required. And, if necessary, supervise the drafting of reports and the follow-up of recommendations.

Thank you.

**Association for the Promotion of the French Language in Flanders
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