

United Nations

15th session of the forum on issues related to minorities

from 1 December to 2 December 2022, Palace of Nations - Geneva - Switzerland

Item 3: Rethink : minority rights defenders and their role in promoting the principles of the Declaration.

Point 3: Re-think: The role of minority rights defenders in the promotion of the principles stated in the Declaration.

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Dear President and representatives,

my name is Emmanuel Le Merlus and I represent the “United in Linguistic Diversity” Association whose aim is to promote the Breton language which is spoken in Brittany, France. In 2009, the Breton language was classified among the seriously endangered languages by UNESCO.

France has experienced troubling periods regarding its national minorities, particularly in Corsica, New Caledonia and Brittany.

Nowadays, peaceful demonstrations are regularly organised in order to claim linguistic rights.

In April 2021, MPs from the presidential majority referred to the Constitutional Council following the vote of a bill in favour of immersive teaching in regional languages.

The Constitutional Council suppressed this bill despite being voted for by a majority of MPs and senators.

A review of the French Constitution would enable the adoption of this type of bill.

The national minorities and majorities of countries could learn each other's languages when their languages differ. Therefore, these minorities and majorities could communicate comfortably and understand each other better.

The conflict risks are reduced when groups of people with different cultures and languages know the language and culture of their neighbours.

Children have the ability to learn many languages from an early age. Teacher exchanges between national minorities and majorities could be organised.

Early multilingualism leads to better intellectual development for children. A well educated youth reduces the risk of conflicts being created.

France is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Yet, it should set an example in terms of recognising and protecting national minorities.