

Madam Chairperson!

I am Rafiul Alom Rahman from India - an OHCHR Minority Fellow, and the founder of The Queer Muslim Project, one of South Asia's leading platforms for LGBTQIA+, Muslim and allied individuals. My work uses socially engaged arts and cultural strategy to counter stereotypes and improve attitudes and behaviours towards LGBTQIA+ persons.

Article 2 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities states that "persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life." And yet, it is no news that in many countries around the world, and more particularly in South Asia, LGBTQIA+ people continue to be amongst the most marginalised populations.

Queer persons belonging to religious or other minorities, face multiple and interlocking marginalizations. LGBTQIA+ Muslim individuals not only face homophobic discrimination and violence, but also experience Islamophobia that often results in increased social stigma, fear of violence, spatial segregation and lack of basic access to economic opportunities such as government jobs.

I believe the Forum on Minority Issues is pivotal to furthering dialogue and cooperation on minority issues. However, there needs to be a more concerted effort at creating opportunities for LGBTQIA+ voices from religious, ethnic, linguistic or national minorities to find space at the forum.

Madam Chairperson, to truly honour and fulfil the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - of "leaving no one behind", it is important that the UN incorporates an intersectional approach to minority issues, including a focused approach on SOGI-related issues across various mandates of the special procedures, such as the special rapporteurs on minority issues, cultural rights and violence against women, and the independent expert on SOGI, through consultations with relevant stakeholders!