

Thank you, Mr. President,

Iraq is considered the original home of many minorities with different orientations. These minorities preserved their characteristics and their relations with other communities in harmony and peace is an expression of the Iraqi people's historic commitment to respect and accept the different beliefs and traditions of others. The cultural diversity that currently exists and the resulting [benefits and progress] is testimony to the benefits of this diversity.

Regretfully, in recent decades, and due to the political troubles, the instability of the ruling regime and what Iraq has been through in general after 2003 in the new political environment which was built on sectarian divisions and representations based on religious, party and sectarian representation which has had a negative impact on different communities in Iraq, especially minorities who were directly harmed by the application of [branch/divisional/sub] identities in political and security work.

Minorities were harmed as a result of being targeted by terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS and other groups. Minority communities lost many of their basic rights. The Yazidi community is a live example of the scale of atrocities that were carried out in the name of these religions because their beliefs were different to those of ISIS.

The arming of many members of these minorities within official and unofficial groups put them in constant and direct conflict with others and burdening them with the responsibility of self-defence has had grave consequences on the economic and social standing of members of these minorities. It has also caused discord within communities of individual minorities and between members of different minorities that live in the same regions. An example of this is a situation in the Nineveh plain region.

The Iraqi government and the international community must act in a balanced and responsible way in order to preserve minorities in Iraq and maintain their basic rights according to local laws and international humanitarian law.