



Thank you President,

My name is Iñaki Irazabalbeitia, member of the Coppieters Foundation Bureau, and I am pleased to be here today, contributing to this debate on how best to approach the challenges and discrimination that minority groups face.

In recent years, our Foundation has closely followed the work of the United Nations Minorities Mandate, sharing the need expressed by the Special Rapporteur, Fernand de Varennes, in his latest report on the importance and urgency of strengthening the legal tools to protect the rights of these communities.

We feel that a new treaty is especially necessary at this time, as we see the rise, both in Europe and globally, of extreme right-wing parties and groups who typically use discourse and policies that deliberately discriminate against minority groups.

Furthermore, we know that when these practices of exclusion, discrimination and inequality become structural and systemic, they can become precursors and potential triggers of conflict.

In this regard, the prospect of a new International Covenant offers the opportunity to tackle some of the limitations of the current UN framework by adopting a broader definition that takes into account the different nature and contexts of minority groups, complementing the individual rights of their members with the recognised rights of the group itself.

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