

## **16<sup>th</sup> session on the UN Forum on Minority Issues**

### **Concluding Remarks by Ms Elena Lazar, Co-Chair of the Forum**

Thank you for giving me back the floor. I would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for his presence and insightful concluding remarks. We have now come to the end of the 16th session of this Forum and it is time for drawing some conclusions.

But before doing so, both chairpersons wish to thank for the opportunity which we were given to co-preside this 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Forum.

We would also like to thank all participants for their remarkable contributions. We believe we have had fruitful discussions on all topics and discerned relevant good practices.

We would equally like to present our sincere gratitude to the Secretariat, interpreters and colleagues who made the running of this event smooth.

We have also prepared some concluding remarks – I will begin, and Petra will continue.

Turning to the conclusions, I would underscore the following:

1. In an evolving global society in which questions of diversity intersect with social and economic considerations, ensuring the effective participation of persons belonging to minorities in social and economic life has become even more pertinent.
2. At international level, there is a discernible gap in addressing several problems encountered by persons belonging to minorities, especially persons in vulnerable situations, in the realization of social and economic rights. Many difficult instances have been reported in these two intense days along with some solutions to overcome them. We take note of all of them. It is indeed saddening to hear all these testimonies about abuses and discriminatory practices towards persons belonging to minorities.
3. However, there are no quick fixes and there is no one-size-fits-all approach, but very much adapted to the social and political realities in each

State. The end result should be that solutions are implemented in order to ensure that social and economic rights are exercised to the fullest by persons belonging to minorities, while at the same time not effecting their inclusion into the society where they live, but rather playing in its benefit.

4. Increased engagement by States with the aim of enhancing the socio-economic inclusion of persons belonging to minorities using successful practices developed around the world, including at regional level, or within the framework of various international organizations could prove a useful starting point.

5. Equal access to public goods and services without direct or indirect discrimination should be ensured and is a necessary precondition for the effective social and economic participation of persons belonging to minorities.

6. Attention should also be paid to organise the education systems, including the vocational training, in order to ensure that everyone has equal access to acquire the skills necessary to participate effectively in the economy of the State of citizenship/ residence.

7. Inter-State cooperation is another tool able to assist in the realisation of the socio-economic rights of persons belonging to minorities. However, it is imperative that this cooperation is founded on the strict observance of international law and principles, which do not accept *the kinship argument* beyond measures aimed at ensuring the protection of the linguistic and cultural identity of ethnics. Hence, in the absence of the express consent of the State of citizenship/residence unilateral measures concerning the socio-economic situation of persons belonging to minorities cannot be taken by other State/ States, irrespective of the relation of kinship in between that State/those States and the targeted persons. This has been underscored in the OSCE *HCNM (High Commissioner on National Minorities) recommendations on the effective participation of national minorities in the social and economic life*, which further qualifies such discriminatory unilateral support as potentially contributing to tensions or even conflict.

8. Hence, dialogue in general about the promotion and the protection of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, which the '92 declaration on their rights underlines, contribute in no small way to their *equality, social inclusion and socio-economic participation* and to the social

stability of the States where they live and more broadly to regional and global political and social stability.

9. The importance attached to UN spaces for dialogue, meaningful participation and exchanges, such as the Forum on Minority Issues, where stakeholders are able to participate and contribute in a free and open manner, to exposing problems and advancing solutions aimed at ensuring the effective realisation of their individual rights including in the socio-economic sphere must be equally emphasized.

10. As it has been stated in the opening session, this year's forum has been unique since it has also prefaced the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UDHR and has been tailored to accommodate all voice and has successfully accomplished this task.

11. Before concluding my remarks, please allow me to quote Martin Luther King Jr.: Almost always, the creative dedicated persons belonging to minorities have made the world better. Therefore, I invite you all to be creative and focus on comprehensive strategies.

12. Thank you for your attention. This concludes my remarks.