

**16<sup>th</sup> session on the UN Forum on Minority Issues**  
**Concluding Remarks by Professor Nicolas Levrat,**  
**Special Rapporteur on minority issues**

Excellencies,

Dear Participants,

First, let me first tell you how happy I am to see that so many of the participants, whether NGO or State representatives, are still present at the time of these concluding remarks.

Thank you for your presence, thank you for our participation.

Last year's conclusions from the previous Special Rapporteur on minority issues was taking note of the fact that more 100 registered speakers did not have the opportunity to take the floor, due to recurrent disturbance to the debate. He was then interpreting that situation as both a proof of the success of the Forum – many registrations, genuine interest to participate and to take the floor – and as the proof that a two day forum on minority issue was an insufficient answer to the needs of minority issues to be heard in the UN HR system, calling for extension and strengthening of the Forum.

I heard during these two days several identical calls for strengthening the forum, making it longer, even making it permanent. I naturally support such claims, but it is neither for

this forum, nor for my mandate to take such decision. But as I've said, I will support and forward such request to the HRC Council... and I'm sure I will also have the support of the interpreters to that proposal! (I take this opportunity to thank them for the – incredible and sometimes even impossible – work they have been performing during these two days.

That being said, I want to emphasize that this year, we had 654 registered participants, and more than 300 requests for taking the floor during the forum; and they could all be accommodated. It is not that speakers learned to speak even faster since last year, but because first:

- the co-chair have been doing an amazing job in steering our forum, and striking a proper balance between diversity of opinions and respect of the rules of procedures. Elena and Petra, thank you very much.
- Second, a great thanks to the Secretariat; they have been performing a difficult and huge task to make sure speakers' lists are balanced and fulfil the rules of procedure of the Forum; and that every organization may have at least one opportunity to speak to the Forum.
- And also my great thanks to all participants for having accepted to actively contribute to the work of the forum; listening and accepting hearing statements that may express very divergent opinions to their own. But still maintaining a

process of dialogue. That is most likely the main reason why we managed to allow everyone who asked for the floor to express its view, at least once during the two days.

As regard content, I can only be struck and amazed by the vast diversity of issues and situations that were expressed in so few hours. As the UNGA said on 10 December 1948 about the fate of minorities, “it is difficult to adopt a uniform solution of this complex and delicate questions, which has special aspects in each State in which it arises”. Actually, this is the whole dialectic challenge of raising minority issues as Human Rights. We naturally all support and promote the universality of Human Rights, as we are all “born free and equal in dignity and rights”. But at the same time, we should all accept to acknowledge the diversity and specificity of the aspirations and claims of persons belonging to minorities.

This dialectic between universality and specificity is the whole challenge of minority issues as Human Rights. The key to work towards positive outcome to this apparent tension is to understand that **universal doesn't mean uniform**. There is room for diversity in universality. And, according to my knowledge, acquired as a scholar and supported by much scholarly research by colleagues from various scientific fields, pluralism and diversity will not weaken universality. Quite on the contrary, it shall make it more robust; stronger; grounded not only in political

philosophy, but in the concrete experience and practice of all persons and communities. Human Rights are not only concepts and values, but also the product of daily life experiences.

Those who enjoy respect of their human rights – hopefully a majority of Human beings – are not necessarily aware of the diversity and complexity of institutions, procedures and decisions that make it possible. Those who do not fully benefit from the enjoyment of all rights, alas very often persons belonging to minority groups, are on the contrary highly, and often painfully aware of the deprivation of their rights, whatever the reasons for their dire situation. This is why this forum exists, allowing every voice to be heard, problems to be exposed, heard or explained.

As I said yesterday in my opening statement, I am asked by the HRC 2007 Resolution that created this Forum, to transmit recommendations from these two days of interactive discussion back to the HRC.

I will. And as I indicated yesterday, I shall prioritize a few, asking with insistence for the HRC and member States to take action on these priority recommendations.

But as for today, I must confess that I am not “Chat GPT” – or any other large language model based artificial intelligence, and I was not able, in the few minutes, before the end of the contributions and now, to process all your inputs and to produce a 2 paragraphs

résumé of the interactive dialogue. In that regard, I feel compelled to underline that HR is a matter for Human beings to enjoy and to implement. So I shall take proper “human time” to do that and organize your inputs in the document that will be submitted to the HRC.

I thank you all for the constructive spirit I felt all through this Forum, and I hope to be able to work with most of you in the coming year in the same spirit, even on difficult and contentious situations.

Thank you.