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Minority issues in the context of the United Nations reform process

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/79.

* [A/80/150](#).



Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat

Summary

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues examines the contribution of the United Nations to the realization of the objectives of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992 (General Assembly resolution [47/135](#), annex).

The Special Rapporteur, building on the work of his predecessors in relation to mainstreaming minority issues at the United Nations, analyses the ways in which United Nations entities, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations implement article 9 of the Declaration and the ways in which they contribute to promoting the rights of minorities in their policies and programmatic work. In addition, the Special Rapporteur examines how minority issues are mainstreamed in the United Nations system, highlighting best practices, challenges, gaps and areas for improvement.

The Special Rapporteur also summarizes his country visits, communications and other mandate activities in the period 2024–2025.

I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, submits the present report to the General Assembly pursuant to his mandate, as established in Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/79 and Human Rights Council resolution [52/5](#). In the report, he summarizes his activities between 2024 and 2025. In the thematic part of the report, the Special Rapporteur examines the contribution of the United Nations to the realization of the objectives of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (General Assembly resolution [47/135](#), annex). He analyses the ways in which United Nations entities, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations implement article 9 of the Declaration and the ways in which they contribute to promoting the rights of minorities in their policies and programmatic work. In addition, he examines how minority issues are mainstreamed in the United Nations system, highlighting best practices, challenges, gaps and areas for improvement. The final section contains conclusions and recommendations.

II. Activities of the Special Rapporteur in 2024 and 2025

2. The Special Rapporteur wishes to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the web page devoted to the mandate on minority issues, where general information is provided on the activities associated with the mandate, including communications, press statements, public appearances, country visits and thematic reports.¹

3. The Special Rapporteur engaged in several activities to raise awareness of minority issues and the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities by attending and participating, in person or online, in conferences and workshops. He also contributed to various other awareness-raising activities, such as consultations and discussions with, inter alia, fellows of the Minorities Fellowship Programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and participated in side events of the Human Rights Council and media interviews. An overview of the activities of the Special Rapporteur in 2024 is provided in the report that he presented to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-eighth session ([A/HRC/58/54](#)).

4. From 11 to 19 January 2025, the Special Rapporteur carried out an academic visit to China at the invitation of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. During visit, which was restricted to Beijing, he held a meeting with academics from the Academy on issues related to Xinjiang and Tibet, as well as meetings at the China University of Political Science and Law, the Minzu University of China and the China Foreign Affairs University. He also held meetings with the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Ministry of Education, the National Religious Affairs Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

5. On 28 January, the Special Rapporteur participated in the online event on the theme “Engaging Romani civil society: a dialogue with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues” as part of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. The event was organized by OHCHR and the panel heard views from the Special Rapporteur, OHCHR, the Chair of Philosophy for Peace of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies and Romani civil society, including the Roma Advisory Council.

¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/SRminorityissuesIndex.aspx.

6. On 20 and 21 February, the Special Rapporteur attended the silver jubilee celebration of International Mother Language Day organized by UNESCO and participated in a high-level panel on the theme “How multilingual education is building inclusive societies and supporting lifelong learning”.
7. On 7 March, the Special Rapporteur participated in the technical meeting of the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities and presented the plan for the activities of his mandate in 2025.
8. On 9 and 10 April, the Special Rapporteur participated in a conference entitled “From promise to action: advancing SDG16 for justice and reform”, organized by the National Commission for Human Rights of Pakistan in Islamabad. Speaking to the panel on the theme “Law enforcement reforms and equal protection”, the Special Rapporteur highlighted key human rights obligations that States must report on in relation to law enforcement practices, in particular with regard to minority protection and non-discrimination. In addition, he discussed how reporting processes could be used more effectively to push for accountability and reform in domestic contexts. He also discussed how international human rights instruments can be leveraged to strengthen protections for minorities in national law enforcement systems. The Special Rapporteur met with authorities, civil society organizations and the Chairperson of the National Commission for Human Rights to learn more about and to discuss minority issues in Pakistan.
9. On 23 April, the Special Rapporteur participated in a research seminar series at IE University in Madrid, where he presented his research on the law of diversity from the perspective of the protection of international human rights. He held a session with students, during which he shared his experience of serving as the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.
10. On 25 April, the Special Rapporteur delivered a keynote speech at the launch of the South Asia Collective report entitled “South Asia state of minorities report 2024: economic, political and social participation and representation of minorities”.
11. On 10 and 11 May, the Special Rapporteur participated in a conference under theme “Re-imagine self-determination 2025” that was hosted by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in Madeira, Portugal. At the conference, the Special Rapporteur chaired the session on the theme “Voices from peoples: resisting new forms of colonization.”
12. On 14 May, the Special Rapporteur presented the priorities of his mandate and his work as a special procedures mandate holder in an interactive dialogue with students at the University of Geneva.
13. On 20 May, the Special Rapporteur met with the subcommittee on human rights of the European Parliament in Geneva.
14. From 23 to 26 May, the Special Rapporteur participated in the Minority Rights Academy organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation in Istanbul, Türkiye.
15. From 24 to 27 June, the Special Rapporteur attended the twentieth International Conference on Minority Languages in Bogotá, at which he delivered a keynote speech on the theme “From large language models to minority languages: a vision for the international landscape of language rights”.
16. On 1 July, the Special Rapporteur spoke at a Human Rights Council side event organized by the Sikh Human Rights Group on the theme “A declaration on diversity for a world in transition”.

17. On 2 July, the Special Rapporteur spoke at the Human Rights Council side event organized by the Next Century Foundation on the theme “Protecting minorities in a future Syria”.

18. On 3 July, the Special Rapporteur spoke at the Human Rights Council side event organized by the International Yazidis Foundation for the Prevention of Genocide on the theme “Protecting minority identity in conflict zones: lessons learned from Iraq and beyond”.

19. On 7 and 8 July, the Special Rapporteur presented the achievements of and challenges faced by his mandate at the Global Minority Rights summer school hosted by the Tom Lantos Institute.

20. On 17 July, the Special Rapporteur delivered a keynote address at a briefing for the Congress of the United States of America in Washington, D.C., on the challenges facing religious minorities in India.

A. Country visits

21. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues was scheduled to visit Iraq from 15 to 23 June 2025. The visit was postponed following the closure of Iraq airspace as the result of the aggression committed by Israel on 12 and 13 June against the Islamic Republic of Iran, in violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. The Special Rapporteur nevertheless thanks the Iraqi authorities, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, the United Nations country team and civil society partners, which spared no efforts to schedule the visit. The Special Rapporteur is in contact with the Iraqi authorities and has reiterated his commitment to reaching an agreement on a mutually acceptable date for a future visit.

22. A country visit to Nepal is scheduled to take place from 6 to 17 October 2025, as agreed with the Nepalese authorities. The Special Rapporteur looks forward to cooperating with the Government of Nepal in that regard.

B. Communications

23. In 2024, a total of 38 communications were sent by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues. Of those, 7 were urgent appeals and 31 were letters of allegation. All of the communications were sent jointly with other special procedures mandate holders. With regard to geographical distribution, 2 of the communications were for the Africa region, 23 for the Asia-Pacific region, 5 for Western Europe and 8 for others, including private companies.

24. From 1 January to 30 June 2025, the Special Rapporteur and other special procedures mandate holders jointly sent a total of 30 communications. Of those, 6 were urgent appeals, 18 were letters of allegation and 6 were letters commenting on and raising concerns about specific legislation, policies and practices. With regard to geographical distribution, 4 of the communications were for the Africa region, 17 for the Asia-Pacific region, 3 for Eastern Europe, 1 for Latin America and the Caribbean and 5 for Western Europe and North America.

C. Forum on Minority Issues

25. The seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues was held on 28 and 29 November 2024 in Geneva. The theme was “The representation and self-representation of minorities in public spaces and discourses”. The event brought

together more than 790 participants from 96 countries, including representatives of States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and entities in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, minority groups, non-governmental organizations and academic experts on minority issues.

26. The seventeenth session of the Forum was aimed at promoting the representation of minorities in society, which affects their effective participation in decision-making and cultural, religious, social, economic and public life, as laid out in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. In March 2025, the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur ([A/HRC/58/69](#)) were presented to Human Rights Council at its fifty-eighth session.

III. Minority issues in the context of the United Nations reform process²

A. Context

27. The year 2025 is one of special significance for the protection of human rights in the United Nations. It is also a year in which needed reforms must be carried out owing to changes in the international situation caused primarily by a series of unilateral decisions on the part of the United States – one of the pillars of the multilateral system, the depositary country of the Charter,³ the host country of the Headquarters of the Organization and one of the permanent members of the Security Council – to withdraw from several international organizations and programmes of the United Nations family, including the Human Rights Council.

28. The research⁴ conducted for the present report was initiated in the third quarter of 2024, before the major changes noted above had occurred. The purpose of the research was to explore how article 9 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities had been implemented. In article 9 of the Declaration, the General Assembly indicates that “[t]he specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system shall contribute to the full realization of the rights and principles set forth in the present Declaration, within their respective fields of competence”. The Special Rapporteur believed that it would be interesting to determine, more than 30 years after the adoption of the Declaration, what the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the divisions of the Secretariat and the organizations of the United Nations system had done to implement that request from the Assembly.

29. That analysis was motivated in part by the statement that the Secretary-General delivered on 21 September 2022 at a high-level General Assembly event to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. In that

² Major unforeseen changes occurred in the international community after the reform process known as the UN80 Initiative was launched. When the Special Rapporteur speaks of the “United Nations reform process”, that expression should not be understood as a reference to the UN80 Initiative, but rather to more fundamental reforms.

³ See Article 111.

⁴ The Special Rapporteur wishes to thank Manon Beury (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), Elie Chirat (University of Geneva), Natacha Pambou-Orski (University of Geneva) and Shafferan Sonneveld (OHCHR) for their research assistance in the preparation of the present report.

statement, he said, “[t]oday, we come to critically assess where we stand in realizing the Declaration [...]. The hard truth is that – thirty years on – the world is falling short. Far short. We are not dealing with gaps – we are dealing with outright inaction and negligence in the protection of minority rights. [...] Excellencies, it is past time we live up to the commitments made in this very hall in 1992”.⁵

30. The truth has been and continues to be that minority issues have never really found their place in the United Nations system. Historically, an international regime for the protection of national minorities was set up under the League of Nations, more than 25 years before the international system for the protection of human rights emerged.⁶ That may be the reason why the General Assembly, when adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, acknowledged that “that the United Nations cannot remain indifferent to the fate of minorities”, but, “considering the universal character of the Declaration of Human Rights”, decided “not to deal in a specific provision with the question of minorities in the text of this Declaration”. Minorities are misfits in the United Nations system for the protection of human rights. This situation led the previous mandate holder, Fernand de Varennes, to assert that “many of the United Nations institutions seem indifferent to minority issues, with minorities remaining largely ‘left behind’ at the Organization when one considers the various initiatives and measures in place institutionally: no treaty, no permanent forum, no voluntary fund, no international decade or year, no mainstreaming of their human rights, no or little reference to them when they are the most affected or marginalized, and so on.”⁷ Although that assessment is not incorrect, the Special Rapporteur will nevertheless show that more than meets the eye is being done for persons belonging to minorities by the institutions and programmes of the United Nations system.

31. While there have been some achievements in that regard, it has been difficult for the United Nations system to properly acknowledge the existence of minorities and take into consideration the specific need of minorities. This is blatantly illustrated by the fact that the word “minority” is not mentioned even once in the Sustainable Development Goals, despite the efforts of the former Independent Expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, who included a thematic discussion on “Ensuring the inclusion of minority issues in the post-2015 development agenda” in the report that she presented in March 2014 to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-fifth session.⁸ The Special Rapporteur himself had tried, in 2024, to push for the word “minority” to be included in the Pact for the Future, without any success.⁹ The failure to mention minorities is all the more disturbing because many other groups, such as children,¹⁰ girls,¹¹ Indigenous Peoples,¹² migrants,¹³ persons with disabilities,¹⁴ older persons,¹⁵

⁵ See www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-the-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious.

⁶ See Joe Verhoeven, “Les principales étapes de la protection internationale des minorités”, *Revue trimestrielle des droits de l’homme* (1997); and Andre Liebich, “Minority as inferiority: minority rights in historical perspective”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 34, No. 2 (April 2008), pp. 243–263.

⁷ A/HRC/52/27, para. 45.

⁸ A/HRC/25/56.

⁹ See the position paper on the issue at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/minorities/sr/Position-Paper-Integrating-Minority-Issues-Pact-Future.pdf.

¹⁰ See General Assembly resolution 70/1, paras. 8, 16, 23, 25, 27, 51 and 67, and Goals 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.a, 5.3, 8.7, 11.2, 11.7 and 16.2.

¹¹ Ibid., preamble, and paras. 3, 15 and 20, and Goals 2.1, 4.1, 4.2, 5 and 6.2.

¹² Ibid., paras. 23, 25, 52 and 79, and Goals 2.3 and 4.5.

¹³ Ibid., paras. 23, 25 and 29, and Goal 8.8.

¹⁴ Ibid., paras. 23 and 25, and Goals 4.5, 8.5, 11.2 and 11.7.

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 23, and Goals 2.2, 11.2 and 11.7.

women¹⁶ and youth¹⁷ are included and receive special attention. This “expunging” of minorities led the previous mandate holder to conclude that, “[i]n short, minorities are the last major group at the United Nations with no specific mechanism or initiative to strengthen the discussion and protection of their human rights [...]”.¹⁸ That conclusion needs to be qualified, because the non-inclusion of minorities in those documents is the result of intergovernmental decisions, whereas there are some initiatives within the United Nations that are specifically aimed at minorities (see paras. 58–62).

32. Accordingly, as the Secretary-General said at the high-level event to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, it is high time that Member States step up to protect minorities and make the Declaration a reality for minorities everywhere.¹⁹ The United Nations and its Member States, however, have never acknowledged and recognized the need for a proper space for minority issues, despite decades of work in the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the inclusion in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of a provision on minority rights, the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities in 1992, the creation by the Commission on Human Rights of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on minority issues in 2006 (Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/79) and the creation by the Human Rights Council of the Forum on Minority Issues in 2007.

33. Given that the entire multilateral system is under reconstruction, the Special Rapporteur believes that the emerging new system presents an opportunity to rethink, reframe and revitalize a proper approach to minority issues within the framework of a transformed United Nations. This task is naturally for sovereign Member States, rather than institutions or a mandate created by those States. The Special Rapporteur believes that it is now an appropriate time to make recommendations on the way to ensure that minority issues will be better addressed in the future. As noted in paragraph 29, the Secretary-General calls on States Members, not United Nations staff or mandate holders, to live up to the commitments that they made. In that connection, the Special Rapporteur wishes to remind States that, in article 1 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, they made a commitment to “protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities” and to “encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity”. Although it is true that this commitment relates directly to “minorities within their respective territories”, failing to recognize the existence and identity of minorities in an international protection regime does negatively affect minorities within their respective territories.

34. In the context of a major shift in the multilateral system, the highest degree of recognition for minorities in the United Nations architecture would come through the adoption of a framework treaty²⁰ for the protection of minorities. The previous mandate holder, after holding consultations with civil society organizations and academics, included a proposed draft treaty in the annex to his 2023 report to the

¹⁶ Ibid., preamble, and paras. 3, 20, 24, 35, 37 and 51, and Goals 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 4.3, 4.6, 5, 6.2, 8.5, 8.8, 11.2, 11.7 and 13b.

¹⁷ Ibid., paras. 14, 23, 25 and 27, and Goals 4.4, 4.6, 8.6, 8.b and 13.b.

¹⁸ [A/HRC/52/27](#) para. 42.

¹⁹ See footnote 5 above.

²⁰ A framework treaty would be more suitable than a regular treaty because, as the General Assembly stated in its resolution 217 C (III) with regard to minorities, “it is difficult to adopt a uniform solution of this complex and delicate question, which has special aspects in each State in which it arises”. A framework treaty would allow general principles to be established for all parties and then adapted to the specificities of national situations.

Human Rights Council.²¹ While the Special Rapporteur agrees that a treaty on the rights of minorities is much needed, he wishes to express his doubts about the method of drafting proposed by the previous mandate holder.²² It would be more appropriate to ask the International Law Commission to study the feasibility of a “minority treaty” on the basis of a thorough and detailed review of existing international norms that protect minorities.

B. Research methodology

35. The Special Rapporteur used a three-phase approach in order to analyse the work done on minority issues by United Nations entities, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations. First, he compiled the work that had been done by the previous mandate holders with regard to implementation by the United Nations system of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities. The Special Rapporteur noted that not much work had been done on the contribution of specialized agencies or related organizations. Accordingly, information is provided in the present report on the contributions of specialized agencies and related organizations, most notably the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), World Bank Group, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and World Meteorological Organization.

36. The Special Rapporteur also analysed the work done by the following Departments and Offices of the Secretariat: Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Department of Global Communications, Department of Peace Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

37. In addition, he reviewed the work done by the principal organs of the United Nations, including the Economic and Social Council, General Assembly and Security Council, some subsidiary bodies, such as the Human Rights Commission and the Peacebuilding Commission, and other entities, programmes and funds, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Food Programme (WFP).

38. The Special Rapporteur, as part of the second phase of his research efforts, reached out directly to United Nations entities in order to develop a comprehensive overview of the work done by the United Nations system towards the realization of the Declaration. He received information from 33 United Nations entities,

²¹ See [A/HRC/52/27](#), para. 66; and www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/Annex1.-A-HRC-52-27_0.docx.

²² See [A/HRC/55/51](#), para. 45.

programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations²³ regarding departments, programmes and initiatives that directly or indirectly address minority issues, whether on their own or in collaboration with other United Nations entities, civil society organizations and national or local authorities. Four United Nations entities, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations²⁴ indicated that they did not have relevant information to contribute to the report, implying that they do not carry out any activities that address minority issues. Having reviewed the mandates of those organizations, the Special Rapporteur considers that they might in fact have initiatives or projects that address minority issues, although they may not be explicitly designated as such.

39. In the third phase of his research effort, the Special Rapporteur issued a public call for input from State and non-state actors about their experience with the United Nations system in relation to minority issues. The contributions received allowed the Special Rapporteur to analyse the progress made in addressing minority issues and identify the gaps in the protection of minority rights.

40. The Special Rapporteur wishes to thank all United Nations entities, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations, civil society actors, academics and Member States that provided contributions, including in response to his call for input for the present report. Owing to the word limit, all the relevant data cannot be included in the present report. Only some of the most significant and relevant findings are reproduced below. In order to make this wealth of information available, all the findings of the Special Rapporteur's research efforts will be published in an online annex to present report that can be found on the website of the mandate holder.²⁵

C. Findings

1. Findings of previous mandate holders

41. With regard to article 9 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities, the former Independent Expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, emphasized the importance of collaborating, in her role as the Independent Expert, with United Nations bodies and

²³ Development Coordination Office, Department of Global Communications, Department of Peace Operations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Trade Centre (ITC), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OHCHR, Peacebuilding Support Office, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Office of Counter-Terrorism, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Youth Office, World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and World Bank.

²⁴ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism).

²⁵ See www.ohchr.org/en/documents/research-papers/contribution-un-full-realization-declaration-rights-persons-belonging.

specialized agencies in order to enhance understanding and capacity concerning minority issues that are relevant to the scope of their work. Having recommended in her 2009 report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/10/11](#)) that development processes should be more focused on the needs of minorities, she described her collaboration with UNDP in relation to poverty alleviation and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals for minorities. Some of the findings from a consultation she co-convened about the engagement of UNDP with minorities in development processes indicated that there was a need for empirical research about minorities and related capacity-building training; a lack of knowledge of the United Nations mechanisms related to minority issues; and a need to undertake specific programmatic activities focused on minority communities. Following that consultation, UNDP produced a resource guide on minorities in development to guide programmatic and policy work.²⁶

42. The former Independent Expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, building on her predecessor's call to include minorities in development processes, advocated, in her 2014 report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/25/56](#)), for the inclusion of minority issues in what was then called the post-2015 development agenda, which is now known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Although she elaborately explained how the post-2015 framework needed to be based on minority rights and how the lack of focus on minority issues in the agenda was considered a failure, we now know that, regrettably, the 2030 Agenda left minorities behind. There is not a single mention of minorities in either the preamble to the 2030 Agenda or the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. The failure to include a specific reference to the marginalization of minorities in the 2030 Agenda was also analysed by the previous mandate holder in his 2021 report to the General Assembly ([A/76/162](#)).

43. The current Special Rapporteur's attempt to include minority issues in the Summit for the Future and the Pact for the Future was also unsuccessful.²⁷ Significant roadblocks continue to prevent minority issues from being included in global development plans. As the previous mandate holder noted, "minorities" are frequently mentioned in the drafts of global development plans, but those references are then removed.²⁸ As stated in his 2024 report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/55/51](#)), the current Special Rapporteur remains committed to overcoming those challenges and ensuring that minority issues are included in the post-2030 development agenda.

44. In his 2022 report to the General Assembly ([A/77/246](#)), the previous mandate holder indicated that there had been a "complete failure to mainstream and integrate the rights of minorities at the United Nations". Similarly, in his 2023 report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/52/27](#)), he lamented the inaction of the United Nations in advancing the protection of minorities when compared with other marginalized groups (see para. 30 above and footnote 7) and again urgently called for the mainstreaming of minority rights in the United Nations. At the time of his report to the Human Rights Council, only six institutional measures to advance the rights of minorities had been taken since the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.²⁹ Among those measures, he put great emphasis on the 2013 Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,³⁰ which needs to be updated. While the current Special Rapporteur can only confirm those

²⁶ Available at www.undp.org/publications/marginalised-minorities-development-programming-resource-guide-and-toolkit.

²⁷ See footnote 9 above.

²⁸ [A/HRC/52/27](#), para. 40.

²⁹ See [A/HRC/52/27](#) para. 33; and sect. C.4 of the present report.

³⁰ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Minorities/GuidanceNoteSG.pdf.

disappointing findings, he does wish to shed light on the programmatic activities carried out by the United Nations that advance the implementation of article 9 of the Declaration.

2. Activities of the principal organs of the United Nations

45. Unsurprisingly, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council deal with minority issues regularly. The Economic and Social Council dealt with minority issues largely through the work of one of its subsidiary bodies, the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, which was dissolved in 2006. The General Assembly addresses minority issues largely through the Human Rights Council, which was established as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly in 2006, and specifically as a consequence of the work of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues or the work of the Forum on Minority Issues, which was established in 2007. Although the activities of the aforementioned entities in relation to minority issues are naturally important in the context of the United Nations, the Special Rapporteur does not consider them as falling within the scope of the present report, because analysing those activities would become self-referential and, therefore, not very useful.

46. More worthy of analysis are the activities linked to minorities of the Security Council. Since 1948, the Security Council has adopted 78 resolutions, including 2 in 2024, that deal with minority issues.³¹ Of those resolutions, three are thematic,³² while the others concern 15 countries.³³ It is therefore clear that, in the context of the United Nations, minorities are both a human rights issue and a security issue. The Secretary General, in his address to the General Assembly on 21 September 2022 (see para. 29), said that “[the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities] enshrined three core truths: First, that minority rights are human rights. Second, that the protection of minorities is integral to the mission of the United Nations. Third, that the promotion of those rights is vital to advancing political and social stability and preventing conflict within and between countries.”³⁴ The security dimension of minority issues needs to be acknowledged and acted upon.

3. Activities of United Nations entities, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations

47. As indicated in the section on methodology, the Special Rapporteur reached out to a long list of relevant United Nations entities. Out of 46 United Nations entities contacted, 33 submitted replies³⁵ in which they presented information about their dedicated departments, programmes and initiatives that directly or indirectly address

³¹ Security Council resolutions [2732 \(2024\)](#) on Iraq and [2763 \(2024\)](#) on Afghanistan.

³² Security Council resolutions [2331 \(2016\)](#) and [2388 \(2017\)](#) on human trafficking, and resolution [2611 \(2021\)](#) on counter-terrorism.

³³ Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Central African Republic, Croatia, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

³⁴ See footnote 5 above.

³⁵ Department of Global Communications, Department of Peace Operations, Development Coordination Office, ESCAP, FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC, ITU, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, OHCHR, Peacebuilding Support Office, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNOPS, United Nations Youth Office, UN-Women, WFP, WHO, WIPO and World Bank.

minority issues, whether on their own or in collaboration with other United Nations entities, civil society organizations and national or local authorities.

48. United Nations entities address minority issues in two ways. One of those ways is to include references to minorities in their planning or strategic documents, as in the case of FAO, ILO, ITU, IOM, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO and the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism). This is also the case for many divisions of the United Nations Secretariat, such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Peace Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OHCHR, UN-Habitat, UN-Women, UNEP, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNOPS. The other way in which United Nations entities address minority issues is through country-level programmatic activities that relate to minority groups.

49. With regard to the first way, in the Secretariat, the Department of Peace Operations, in a document entitled “The protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping”, states that “[a]nalysis and planning for [protection of civilians] must consider the protection needs and threats faced by different groups of civilians, including, but not limited to, women, men, children, older persons, youth, people with disabilities, *ethnic, religious and minority groups*, as well as displaced populations”.³⁶ The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in its publication entitled “Thematic review on local Peacebuilding”, notes that “local organizations with a history of opposition to government or those that are connected to *marginalized groups, such as ethnic, religious or sexual minorities*, may find themselves excluded from partnership even if they can meet fund recipients’ eligibility requirements and are best placed to support local action”.³⁷ Similarly, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in its strategic plan for 2023–2026, states that “[r]isks disproportionately affect people who suffer from structural inequities, including women and girls, children and youth, *racial and ethnic minorities* [...]. To ensure people most at risk can access assistance and protection, the humanitarian sector must identify marginalized groups, ensure their participation, and tailor programmes to their specific risks and needs. Such groups include women and girls, children and youth, *racial and ethnic minorities* [...]”.³⁸

50. With regard to the specialized agencies, the Special Rapporteur notes with interest that UN Tourism, in its Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, states that “stakeholders in tourism development and tourists themselves should observe *the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities* and Indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth”.³⁹ In the field of health, WHO, in one of its publications on strengthening primary healthcare, states that, “[s]ince 2021, WHO’s Ethnicity and Health workstream has aimed to support tackling health inequities that are linked to racism, racial discrimination and intersecting forms of social exclusion. It does this by providing evidence, working across the levels of WHO to support national authorities, and working together with other United Nations System agencies to mainstream a focus on racial discrimination and *protection of minorities*.”⁴⁰ Taking into account the preceding extracts and the numerous other documents and sources that are cited in the online annex to the present

³⁶ See https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/2023_protection_of_civilians_policy.pdf (emphasis added).

³⁷ See www.un.org.peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/local_peacebuilding_thematic_review_final_report.pdf (emphasis added).

³⁸ www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/ochas-strategic-plan-2023-2026-transforming-humanitarian-coordination (emphasis added).

³⁹ See www.unwto.org/ethics-culture-and-social-responsibility (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/363854/9789240057104-eng.pdf?sequence=1> (emphasis added).

report (see para. 40), it is clear that there is no neglect of minority issues. Awareness of minority issues, however, is not always highlighted. The Special Rapporteur and his research team had to conduct extensive research on the websites of various organizations in order to supplement the information provided by the specialized agencies and the Departments and Offices of the Secretariat. In addition, it appears that minority issues are often mixed with the issues of other marginalized groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, victims of racism, women and young people, and therefore less visible.

51. With regard to the integration of minority issues in country programmes, the inputs provided by United Nations entities included many tangible examples and encompassed a large geographical scope. The countries of Sub-Saharan Africa were mentioned in 15 submissions.⁴¹ Notably, the Democratic Republic of the Congo seems to be a major focus of the minority-related activities carried out in the region by United Nations entities. In many cases, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa were mentioned in the context of protecting affected ethnic or religious minorities in conflict areas, such as the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

52. A total of 12 Asian countries were mentioned in the submissions of United Nations entities.⁴² The Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand seem to be the focus of the minority-related activities carried out in the region by the reporting entities. In addition, United Nations bodies addressed issues related to religious minorities, such as the Muslims of Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines, and linguistic minorities. For example, UNDP carried out a project in Viet Nam that included promoting access to legal information among linguistic minorities through the translation of communication materials into ethnic minority languages. Entities operating in Asia also reported that they addressed gender issues affecting minorities. In that connection, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict reported that women and girls from ethnic minorities in Afghanistan are at particular risk of forced marriages.⁴³

53. Countries and areas from the Eastern Europe region were mentioned in 11 different submissions.⁴⁴ Those countries were almost exclusively mentioned in the context of addressing issues affecting the Roma population, such as socioeconomic integration (UNDP), access to public resources (UNICEF) and health (WHO).

54. The countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region, in particular Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru, were mentioned in 10 submissions. The reporting entities indicated that they focused on addressing the needs of Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendant communities in those countries. While the examples provided by the entities were of activities dedicated to groups that are designated as Indigenous Peoples or Afrodescendant, those groups can also be considered minority groups. For example, the Afrodescendant Quilombola people in Brazil, who can be considered an ethnic minority in that country, have been the beneficiaries of many activities carried out by United Nations entities, including UN-Women, WIPO and IFAD.

⁴¹ Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

⁴² Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

⁴³ See <https://www.refworld.org/reference/themreport/srsgsvc/2023/en/148832>.

⁴⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and Ukraine, as well as Kosovo. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

55. Seven countries from the Middle East and North Africa region were mentioned in the submissions from United Nations entities.⁴⁵ Iraq was the country most frequently mentioned, with an emphasis on religious minorities and a special focus on the Yazidis. Countries from other parts of the world, such as Western countries⁴⁶ and countries from the Pacific region,⁴⁷ were also mentioned in the inputs received.

56. With regard to negotiations concerning United Nations programmatic activities at the country level that were agreed upon in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the Special Rapporteur was informed that Governments are often reluctant to accept the inclusion of activities that make explicit references to specific minority categories or groups, in order to avoid any United Nations attention on them and their issues. This is an issue that should be tackled in a longer-term strategy, with a view to raising awareness and increasing the relevance of dealing openly and specifically with the needs of minority communities from the human rights, development and security perspectives.

57. The Special Rapporteur was also informed that individuals belonging to minorities encounter obstacles and, sometimes, discrimination in their interactions with UNHCR. For example, in some instances, individuals could not be registered under their actual name, or the specific needs of some religious practices were ignored. The Special Rapporteur understands that those issues often arise as the result of provisions in national laws and, in that connection, commends UNHCR for its efforts to support legal reforms aimed at removing discriminatory provisions in national laws. The Special Rapporteur notes that UNHCR is aware of this matter, as reflected in its policy on age, gender and diversity⁴⁸ and in several internal guidance documents that are focused specifically on minorities.⁴⁹ The Special Rapporteur urges UNHCR to fully implement the policy and guidance contained in those documents, with a view to ensuring that these issues are not left unaddressed and unresolved.

4. United Nations initiatives specifically targeting minority issues

58. In addition to the mandate of Special Rapporteur on minority issues, there are five other initiatives worth highlighting that specifically deal with minority issues. The Forum on Minority Issues, established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 6/15, has been convened every year since 2007 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Civil society organization have made calls to upgrade the Forum,⁵⁰ which brings together between 500 and 790 participants every year (attendance figures have grown steadily in recent years, peaking in 2024), or to complement it with regional minority forums.⁵¹ Despite the commitment of the Special Rapporteur and his predecessors to achieving that aim, budgetary and logistical constraints make it very unlikely that any improvements might soon be made. That is unfortunate, because discussion of minority issues by civil society, States and the United Nations system is necessary in order to raise awareness and explore paths for increasing the capacity to deal with minority issues within the United Nations and at the country level. The

⁴⁵ Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, Mauritania, Türkiye and United Arab Emirates.

⁴⁶ Canada, Finland, Greece, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁴⁷ Australia, New Zealand and Vanuatu.

⁴⁸ UNHCR, “UNHCR policy on age, gender and diversity”, March 2018.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., UNHCR, “Working with national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples”, Need to Know Guidance, No. 3, 2011; UNHCR, “Applying the UNHCR age, gender and diversity policy to minorities and indigenous peoples”, tip sheet, April 2021; and UNHCR, *Emergency Handbook*, available at <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/persons-risk/minorities-and-indigenous-peoples> (which includes a dedicated entry on minorities and Indigenous Peoples).

⁵⁰ See A/HRC/46/58, A/HRC/49/81, A/HRC/52/71, A/HRC/55/70 and A/HRC/58/69.

⁵¹ A/HRC/52/71, paras. 61 and 62.

Special Rapporteur also finds it regrettable that United Nations entities do not participate more regularly and actively in the Forum. Over the past five years, engagement in the Forum by the various constituents of the United Nations system has been minimal. Of the more than 190 speakers who have delivered a statement at each the past five Forums, only a handful have been from the United Nations system, mostly from OHCHR.⁵² In fact, the pattern has been trending downward, with engagement by the United Nations steadily decreasing over the past five years. This failure to participate more actively in the Forum represents a missed opportunity for the United Nations system to engage with minority groups from all over the world and draw the attention of civil society organizations and Member States to the work that the United Nations is carrying out to address the many grievances that minorities raise at the Forum.

59. The Minorities Fellowship Programme was launched in 2005 and is run by OHCHR. It is the most comprehensive training programme for human rights and minority rights defenders belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. After a month-long training session in Geneva, the fellows gain general knowledge of the United Nations system, international human rights instruments and mechanisms that are specifically relevant to minorities issues. Fellows are expected to disseminate the knowledge that they gain to their communities and organizations. The Programme also serves as an opportunity for human rights activists involved protecting and promoting minority rights to expand their network by engaging in strategic dialogue with fellow activists from across the globe, relevant actors from the United Nations system and relevant non-governmental organizations, among other partners. The Programme is offered in Arabic, English and Russian. Since 2005, 264 minority fellows (144 men and 120 women) from 70 countries have participated in the Programme. Former minority fellows also constitute a network that can usefully support the Special Rapporteur in his enquiries concerning violations of minority rights or in preparations for country visits. Despite the severe budgetary restrictions affecting OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur wishes to emphasize that this programme must not be curtailed in any way, because it is the main United Nations-led initiative aimed at addressing the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

60. More than 20 United Nations departments, agencies, programmes and funds⁵³ collaborate through the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities. It is currently co-chaired by OHCHR, one of the network's permanent co-chairs, and UNFPA. The network is a United Nations inter-agency platform that carries out awareness-raising, advocacy and capacity-building on issues related to racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including issues of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.⁵⁴ The network was established in 2012 by a decision of the Secretary-General as a platform for addressing racial discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, and for enhancing dialogue and cooperation between United Nations departments, agencies, programmes and funds. In recent years, the network has published a number of documents that support the United

⁵² The Special Rapporteur on racism, the Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section of OHCHR and minority fellows from the Minorities Fellowship Programme.

⁵³ Members of the network include the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Global Communications, Development Coordination Office, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, ILO, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OHCHR, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Peacebuilding Support Office, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, UNDP, UNEP, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, UNODC, UN-Women, WFP and WHO.

⁵⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/un-network-racial-discrimination-and-protection-minorities.

Nations system in mainstreaming minority rights, including the Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities⁵⁵ and a checklist to strengthen the work of the United Nations at the country level to combat racial discrimination and advance minority rights that was translated into several languages.⁵⁶ The network also developed a training package for United Nations country teams. In addition, the network organizes side events at Human Rights Council sessions and community-of-practice meetings for United Nations country teams. The Special Rapporteur had the opportunity to attend online sessions of the network. He noted that only a small number of network members had attended those session and that the meeting in which he had participated could have benefitted from more clearly defined outcomes. The Special Rapporteur considers that this potentially important platform is underused and does not have the resources needed to promote minority issues within the United Nations system. He strongly recommends revitalizing the network and better focusing its efforts on concrete coordination and seeking synergies to advance the cause of minorities.

61. The Faith for Rights initiative of OHCHR deals with many issues facing religious minorities, a group that is specifically targeted in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Activities in the context of the Faith for Rights initiatives are carried out on the basis of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence⁵⁷ and the Beirut Declaration and its 18 Commitments on Faith for Rights⁵⁸. The Special Rapporteur believes that emphasis should be placed on article 18 of the Beirut Declaration, which provides that “[r]eligious communities, their leaders and followers have a role and bear responsibilities independently from public authorities both under national and international legal instruments. By virtue of article 2 (1) of the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, ‘no one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons or person on the grounds of religion or belief’. This provision establishes direct responsibilities of religious institutions, leaders and even each individual within religious or belief communities.” While acknowledging the relevance of that principle, the Special Rapporteur wishes to emphasize that the role and responsibilities of religious communities and their leaders do not in any way minimize the responsibility of States to recognize and to protect religious minorities.

62. Since 2022, OHCHR, with impetus from the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights and in partnership with the civil society organizations Freemuse and Minority Rights Group and the city of Geneva, has organized the International Art Contest for Minority Artists,⁵⁹ the results of which are announced each year in connection with the Forum on Minority Issues. Although artistic expression is not one of the classic modes of international cooperation, the Special Rapporteur commends and supports this initiative, which allows persons belonging to minorities to shed a different light on their situation and share their perception of their place in society as a whole.

⁵⁵ United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, *Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* (2022).

⁵⁶ United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, “Checklist to strengthen UN work at country level to combat racial discrimination and advance minority rights”, 2021.

⁵⁷ Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (see [A/HRC/22/17/Add.4](#), appendix).

⁵⁸ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/BeirutDeclarationonFaithforRights.pdf.

⁵⁹ See www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/minority-artists-voice-and-dissidence.

D. Analysis

63. In view of the foregoing, it is clear that we are not “dealing with outright inaction and negligence in the protection of minority rights”.⁶⁰ There are only very rare references, however, to the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and to article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in all United Nations activities. This leads to a lack of visibility for actions aimed at addressing minority issues.

64. It is clear, however, that there is much action concerning minorities not only in the field of human rights, but also with regard to development programmes or security issues. That action, unfortunately, is not visible and relevant enough, leading the Secretary-General and previous mandate holders to make blunt remarks in that regard. In preparing the present report, the Special Rapporteur found that this lack of visibility can be attributed to two distinct factors, both of which make it difficult for United Nations activities to be identified as being actions aimed at addressing minority issues.

65. First, minority issues are being included in larger frameworks or within a series of issues that are relevant to targeted groups, which leads to actions not being identified as targeting minorities specifically. Indeed, minorities are not mentioned at all in some cases, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the Pact for the Future, because they are considered to be implicitly covered by the “no one left behind” pledge. That could be a plausible explanation for why minorities are not mentioned, except that many other vulnerable groups that could be covered by such a broad pledge are also specifically mentioned in these intergovernmentally negotiated documents.⁶¹ The Special Rapporteur has identified two reasons for this unacceptable omission. The first is historical. Minority issues were a major topic during the League of Nations era. Accordingly, many countries consider minority issues to be mostly a European matter and therefore of little concern to non-European States. Second, States are reluctant to deal with minority issues within the framework of the United Nations because they consider those issues as being highly political at the national level, and therefore there is in no need to address them in multilateral forums. In that regard, the Special Rapporteur would like to remind all Member States that they recognized, by consensus, the specific need for protection of persons belonging to minorities in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. In article 1 of Declaration, they commit themselves to recognize the existence and the identity of persons belonging to minorities. As the Special Rapporteur noted in his most recent report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/58/54), recognition of the existence and identity of minorities is consubstantial to their enjoyment of human rights. By denying minority groups specific recognition in United Nations documents, or by mixing minority issues with other issues, such as racism,⁶² persons with disabilities,⁶³ marginalized communities⁶⁴ and others, Member States and United Nations organizations are not living up to the commitment to specifically recognize minorities as such. This will need to change.

66. Second, most efforts dealing with minority issues target one category of minorities, not minorities in general. In the field of development,⁶⁵ the focus is mostly

⁶⁰ See para. 29 above.

⁶¹ See footnotes 10–17 above.

⁶² See para. 50 above.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ For example, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD, UNDP, UN-Women and World Bank Group.

on ethnic minorities, or sometimes religious minorities, in relation to discrimination based on work and descent (castes). In the field of security,⁶⁶ the focus is primarily on religious minorities, or sometimes national minorities, while specialized agencies concentrate on cultural rights, communication or education,⁶⁷ with a focus on linguistic minorities. This segmentation of minorities into different categories, although understandable and supported by wording of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities,⁶⁸ leads to a lack of visibility for “minority-focused” actions in general.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

67. There is room to increase the attention paid by the United Nations system to minority issues. The good news is that the problem is caused more by a lack of visibility than a lack of activity. It can therefore be addressed without a major budgetary increase. In addition, existing mechanisms to deal with minority issues could be put to better use. For example, the United Nations system could strengthen the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities by providing it with resources, while enhancing participation in the network and scaling up the output of its activities for greater impact across the United Nations system and beyond. United Nations entities should also increase their active participation in the Forum on Minority Issues in order to engage with minority representatives and help civil society to see and understand the engagement of the United Nations as a whole in support of persons belonging to minorities. Recalling the appeal that the Secretary-General made to the General Assembly in 2022, it is time for Member States to deal properly with minority issues, in line with the commitments that they made in 1992 by adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

68. The Special Rapporteur, recalling that minorities are not mentioned at all in either the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the Pact of the Future, strongly recommends that Member States live up to the commitment that they made in 1992 to recognize the existence and identity of minorities by acknowledging the existence and the specific needs of minorities and by specifically mentioning minorities in the post-2030 agenda.

69. Considering the major ongoing reforms of the United Nations system, the Special Rapporteur calls on Member States to recognize the centrality of minority issues not only to the human rights pillar, but also to the development and the peace and security pillars, and to acknowledge their interconnected nature, with a view to ensuring that minority issues are much better integrated into the emerging reformed system.

70. In order to help ensure the implementation of the preceding recommendation, the Special Rapporteur calls on the General Assembly to organize an international summit or conference on minority issues in advance of the negotiation and elaboration of a post-2030 agenda, with a view to ensuring that the question of minorities is addressed in the development, human rights and peace and security pillars and that minorities are considered actors in the context of those pillars.

⁶⁶ Security Council, Department of Peace Operations and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

⁶⁷ ITU and UNESCO.

⁶⁸ See also [A/74/160](#) and [A/75/211](#).

71. The Special Rapporteur calls upon the General Assembly to request the International Law Commission, in the context of the progressive development of international law and in accordance with article 16 of the Statute of the Commission, to include in its programme of work the issue of the protection of minorities and persons belonging to minorities, with the view to producing a draft multilateral treaty.

72. The Special Rapporteur calls upon Member States to guarantee appropriate funding, despite the dire fiscal situation, for the Forum on Minority Issues, with a view to ensuring the equitable and broadest possible participation of stakeholders, including by means of a permanent fund.⁶⁹

73. The Special Rapporteur urges Member States to strengthen funding the Minorities Fellowship Programme and urges OHCHR to avoid making cuts to this unique, successful and essential programme that is specifically designed for persons belonging to minorities.

74. The Special Rapporteur encourages United Nations entities, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations to explicitly mention in their programmatic documents the work and activities carried out by the United Nations to address minority issues and protect minority rights.

75. The Special Rapporteur recommends that specialized agencies, other entities, the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes designate, at a relevant level, a focal point on minority issues whose focus is designing and reporting on minority-related strategies or projects. These focal points should actively participate in the network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities.

76. The Special Rapporteur strongly recommends that resources be allocated to the network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, with a view to enabling the network to hold an in-person meeting at least once a year in Geneva on the day before the Forum on Minority Issues and ensure the active participation of network members in the Forum. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the network organize a specific side event in order to present to minority representatives information on the salient aspects of the work of the United Nations for the benefit of persons belonging to minorities.

77. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, in partnership with his mandate, update the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, with a view to enabling the Secretary-General to publish a revised or a new version of the Guidance Note.

78. The Special Rapporteur calls upon resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to thoroughly implement, in their common country analyses and in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and the recommendations of the network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, with a view to improving their focus on racial, ethnic and other minorities. In that connection, resident coordinators and country teams are called upon to recognize in their work the intersectional nature of discrimination that many minorities face, while addressing the root causes of their marginalization in the United Nations programmatic activities.

⁶⁹ Currently, the Forum can only be organized thanks to voluntary contributions from Austria and the voluntary and unpaid work of interns.

79. The Special Rapporteur invites members of the academic community and other interested stakeholders, including from the United Nations system and civil society, to work, in partnership with his mandate, on the development of a new index to monitor the progress made with regard to the recognition, protection and inclusion of minorities in the societies of Member States.
