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Recommendations made by the Forum on Minority Issues at its sixteenth session, on the theme “Minorities and cohesive societies: equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation”

Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat*

Summary

The recommendations contained in the present report are drawn primarily from the discussions held and contributions made by participants at the sixteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, held on 30 November and 1 December 2023, on the theme “Minorities and cohesive societies: equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation”. The Forum was divided into four panel discussions: (a) “Challenges to inclusion and equality: barriers to the social and economic participation of persons belonging to minority groups”; (b) “Socioeconomic empowerment”; (c) “Legal and structural approaches to more inclusive societies”; and (d) “Protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minority groups towards cohesive societies”. The aim of the Forum was to serve as a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues faced by persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups and to tackle the multiple challenges faced by minority communities worldwide, focusing on strengthening their socioeconomic participation and ensuring equality and social inclusion.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 6/15 and 19/23. It contains the recommendations made by the Forum on Minority Issues at its sixteenth session, held in Geneva on 30 November and 1 December 2023, on the theme “Minorities and cohesive societies: equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation”. The work of the Forum was guided by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat. The Forum was co-chaired by the President of the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Petra Roter, and member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Elena Lazar. There were more than 570 participants from 74 countries, including representatives of States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and mechanisms in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, minority groups and non-governmental organizations and academics and experts on minority issues.

2. The aim of the sixteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues was to tackle the multiple challenges faced by minority communities worldwide, focusing on strengthening their socioeconomic participation and ensuring equality and social inclusion. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Forum was intended to promote work towards a future with no poverty and reduced inequality, where peace, justice and strong institutions prevail within cohesive societies. While minority groups, which are often among the world’s most marginalized and vulnerable, are not specifically mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals, their protection needs should be explicitly recognized in the context of efforts to honour the pledge to leave no one behind and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. The Forum looked at the lived realities of contemporary societies in which minority groups often grapple with the persistent challenges of systemic inequities and discrimination, hindering their access to vital resources and equal opportunities in various spheres, such as education, employment and health care. At the same time, the Forum recognized the integrative role played by those genuinely cohesive and inclusive societies that manage to create conducive environments in which dignity and the potential of all individuals, regardless of their ethnic, religious or linguistic identity, are promoted and valued and in which, rather than merely surviving, minority communities thrive and become essential contributors to a sustainable and shared future.

3. The Forum was divided into four panel discussions: (a) “Challenges to inclusion and equality: barriers to the social and economic participation of persons belonging to minority groups”, which was aimed at addressing the systemic and structural challenges and discrimination that minority groups might face, including the unique obstacles for women and girls belonging to minority groups, and exploring the factors placing them at a disadvantage, such as language or other requirements or lack of educational opportunities; (b) “Socioeconomic empowerment”, in which participants explored ways of amplifying the economic participation of people belonging to minority groups and emphasized equal opportunities in society, employment and entrepreneurship, with special attention given to economic support for migrants and refugees belonging to minority groups, in particular with a view to empowering young people; (c) “Legal and structural approaches to more inclusive societies”, in which participants discussed legislation, policies and the provision of public goods and services that respected the rights of minority groups to equality without discrimination and addressed access to health care, how legislation could increase opportunities for minority groups and the importance of equal access to technology and fostering digital literacy within minority communities; and (d) “Protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minority groups towards cohesive societies”, in which positive examples, good practices and legal and institutional frameworks and policies that effectively safeguarded the rights of persons belonging to minority groups and promoted the inclusion of such persons in society were highlighted.

4. The recommendations made by the Forum at its sixteenth session are set out below, organized under the four agenda items that framed the discussion during the session. The recommendations:

(a) Are aimed at addressing the main challenges faced by persons belonging to minority groups in the context of their socioeconomic participation and their equitable access to the employment market, health services, education and technology;

(b) Are intended to leverage opportunities, practices and initiatives that strengthen the inclusion of minority groups, in line with the principles and rights enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international instruments;

(c) Contribute to efforts to integrate the rights of persons belonging to minority groups into the institutions, structures and initiatives of the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels.

5. The recommendations reflect a recognition of the important role that the United Nations, other international and regional organizations, civil society organizations, representatives of minority groups and other stakeholders can play in building more cohesive societies, which take into account equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation.

6. The recommendations are intended to be implemented throughout the world to assist States in better understanding their human rights obligations in relation to minority groups and in identifying approaches to ensure full respect for universal human rights standards.

7. They are also intended to encourage further wide-reaching discussions with representatives of minority groups on the way forward and action-oriented means of enhancing the protection of the human rights of persons belonging to minority groups, in particular by strengthening their socioeconomic participation and ensuring their equality and social inclusion.

II. Consolidated recommendations of the Special Rapporteur

8. On the basis of the recommendations compiled below and his introductory speech, the Special Rapporteur proposes the following five consolidated recommendations:

(a) States should recognize the need for inclusion and effective participation as key components of valuing diversity in societies;

(b) States should acknowledge the urgency of overcoming destabilizing inequalities in order to achieve a greener, better and safer future;

(c) States should work towards the development of human rights economies that place human rights at the centre of economic policymaking and focus on protecting and enhancing the meaningful participation of marginalized groups, including minority groups, in economic decision-making. That includes both participatory budgeting initiatives that ensure the engagement of minority groups in budgetary decision-making and increased investment in essential social services to ensure the equal access of minority groups to quality education, health and housing. It also includes adopting and implementing national legislation and policies that extend the protection of labour laws and social security to include minority groups working in informal economies;

(d) When analysing and addressing the challenges that minority groups face in entering the labour market, States should invest in targeted programmes that enable those groups to acquire the skills necessary to participate effectively in the economy, including targeted scholarships, training programmes, internships and fellowships in higher education. That includes investing in minority language education and fostering digital literacy programmes within minority communities;

(e) The United Nations should continue to foster the meaningful participation, collaboration, representation and advocacy of persons belonging to minority groups in United Nations forums, including on socioeconomic issues. That includes supporting the engagement of minority groups in United Nations intergovernmental processes through the major groups and other stakeholders structure while continuing to support the work of the United Nations network on racial

discrimination and protection of minorities. It also includes strengthening the Forum on Minority Issues by supporting the creation of a voluntary fund to sponsor the meaningful participation of civil society and representatives of minority groups in the Forum.

III. General recommendations

9. States should become parties and adhere to all international and regional human rights instruments that protect and promote the human rights of persons belonging to minority groups.
10. States should ensure the full implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.
11. States should encourage the ongoing engagement of stakeholders in the Forum on Minority Issues in order to foster dialogue and cooperation, while acknowledging the valuable guidance produced by the Forum and emphasizing its relevance to human rights actors at the international, regional and national levels.
12. States should strengthen the Forum on Minority Issues by supporting the establishment of a voluntary fund to promote the meaningful participation of civil society and representatives of minority groups in the Forum.
13. States should recognize the importance of minority groups in creating flourishing societies and the role of celebrating diversity in contributing to societal cohesion.
14. States should work towards the development of human rights economies that place human rights at the centre of economic policymaking and are focused on protecting and enhancing the meaningful participation of marginalized groups, including minority groups, while increasing investment in essential social services, such as education, health care and housing.
15. The United Nations should continue to encourage collaborative efforts to ensure that economies deliver better outcomes for human rights, taking into account the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, such as minority groups.
16. The United Nations should continue to advocate comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation globally and the development and implementation of effective anti-discrimination measures, in order to ensure equal opportunities.

IV. Recommendations for addressing challenges to inclusion and equality, including barriers to the social and economic participation of persons belonging to minority groups

17. States should promote the collection of disaggregated data to better understand and analyse the discrimination that minority groups face and the challenges that they encounter with regard to social inclusion.
18. States should apply the Sustainable Development Goals framework in the context of data collection in neighbourhoods with large populations of persons belonging to minority groups, in particular in spheres such as water, sanitation, health care, education and gender equality.
19. States should take measures to provide inclusive education, in particular in the languages of minority groups.
20. States should make budgetary allocations for quality education for minority groups.

21. States should ensure that minority groups have equal access to quality education, in compliance with international standards on the right to education for those groups, with a view to achieving equal educational outcomes.¹
22. States should adopt and implement national legislation and policies that extend the protection of labour laws and social security to include persons belonging to minority groups working in informal economies.
23. States should ensure the establishment of free, accessible and effective complaint mechanisms to address the employment discrimination experienced by minority groups.
24. States should involve and consult representatives of minority communities in the elaboration of economic policies in order to build trust and empower those communities.
25. States should recognize the economic inclusion of minority groups as essential for societal stability and harmony and work towards providing those groups with equal access to education, employment and business opportunities.
26. States should develop inclusive policies to address root causes such as poverty, inequality and discrimination in order to contribute to peace.
27. States should acknowledge the positive contribution of minority groups to societal development and promote social cohesion by recognizing and valuing diversity.
28. States and non-State actors should uphold the principle of equality, including by promoting differentiated treatment to ensure effective protection for persons belonging to minority groups in accordance with their unique situations.
29. States should recognize and address discrimination against minority groups in the socioeconomic sphere and understand the intersection between minority issues and broader human rights concerns.
30. States should acknowledge and commit to advancing the rights of persons belonging to minority groups while recognizing the connection between the economic inclusion of those groups and overall sustainable development.

V. Recommendations for achieving socioeconomic empowerment

31. States should support and promote grass-roots initiatives, such as pro bono and legal aid networks, that address discrimination at the community level and establish effective monitoring bodies to track progress and challenges in combating discrimination.
32. States should promote participatory budgeting initiatives that ensure the engagement of minority groups in budgetary decision-making processes.
33. States should assess whether minority groups are benefiting from policies and projects designed to support their socioeconomic empowerment and, if they are, the extent to which they are benefiting.
34. States should invest in programmes that build employable skills for minority groups, such as targeted scholarships, training programmes, internships and fellowships in higher education.
35. States should prioritize minority languages in education and workplace settings to foster social cohesion and promote the protection of the languages of minority groups as a factor in economic development.
36. States should apply an intersectional approach when designing policies for the socioeconomic empowerment of minority groups and recognize the multiple forms of

¹See [A/HRC/FMI/2008/2](#) and [A/HRC/16/46](#).

discrimination that they may face, owing to, inter alia, their caste, gender, age or disability or refugee status.

37. States should educate wider society about minority groups and the value of diverse cultural identities.
38. States should implement tailored approaches to addressing discrimination, taking into account the unique challenges faced by different minority groups.
39. States should develop comprehensive strategies for the education of persons belonging to minority groups, including measures to counteract hate speech.
40. States should increase the economic participation of marginalized communities, in particular those with significant migrant and refugee populations.
41. States should expand skills-based hiring and support the access of minority groups to workforce training to create pathways to financial stability.
42. States should increase spaces for inclusive dialogue to ensure sustainable and equitable development.
43. States and non-State actors should encourage partnerships among minority communities to strengthen unity and overcome common challenges.
44. States should recognize and protect the traditional livelihood systems of minority communities in their economic and social policies.
45. States should promote minority-friendly policies aligned with international conventions and declarations.
46. States should address intersectionalities, with a particular focus on young people and refugees, in the context of discussions about positive measures and empowerment.
47. States should support projects that provide advice and information, including with regard to job opportunities and education, to marginalized communities.
48. States should collaborate with international organizations to establish a United Nations voluntary fund on minority groups to ensure the meaningful participation of persons belonging to minority groups in global strategic spaces and to support initiatives that promote their rights globally.
49. States should invest in countering hateful narratives about minority groups through meaningful dialogue and narrative change initiatives.
50. States should foster the inclusion of ethnic and racial issues in political projects in an intersectional way.
51. States should establish schools that cater to the needs of communities, train teachers to ensure inclusivity and incorporate minority-specific content into national curricula to raise awareness and promote understanding.
52. States and non-State actors should empower women socioeconomically in order to promote gender equality and strengthen communities.
53. States and non-State actors should facilitate the participation of minority groups with disabilities in human rights forums in order to address socioeconomic barriers.
54. States should support humanitarian initiatives that enhance the social and economic inclusion of marginalized communities.
55. States should implement humanitarian actions in regions hosting the highest numbers of internally displaced persons.
56. The United Nations should incorporate an intersectional approach to minority issues, including sexual identity, in strategic global spaces, including the Forum on Minority Issues.

VI. Recommendations for harnessing legal and structural approaches to more inclusive societies

57. States should adopt and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that protect the rights of persons belonging to minority groups.
58. States should promote the celebration and preservation of minority cultures, recognizing their unique contributions.
59. States should implement legislative measures to bridge the digital divide and ensure equal access to technology for minority communities.
60. States should foster digital literacy programmes within minority communities to empower them to fully participate in the digital age.
61. States should establish specialized institutions for minority groups and policies to raise awareness about minority issues.
62. States should integrate minority issues into broader frameworks, such as the gender equality, child rights and disability rights frameworks.
63. States should incorporate minority issues into national human rights action plans and development strategies.
64. States should apply intersectionality, gender-based analysis and the human security framework in order to address minority issues holistically.
65. States should take into account the inclusion of minority groups in decision-making structures and change-making roles.
66. States should ensure that persons affected by discriminatory measures, in particular persons belonging to marginalized Roma communities, have the right to a legal remedy and adequate compensation.
67. States should propose the creation of a dedicated advisory subgroup focusing on gendered pluralism and the rights of persons belonging to minority groups in order to integrate diverse perspectives into policy decisions.
68. States should empower minority groups, in particular young people who belong to minority groups, through educational activities, scholarship programmes and paid internships in State institutions.
69. States should implement teacher training programmes to sensitize educators to the needs of marginalized communities.
70. States should enhance infrastructure provisions to ensure that basic amenities are accessible to all, regardless of religious or ethnic background.
71. States should emphasize the importance of considering international human rights standards in the formulation of policy solutions in order to ensure the full participation of minority groups within their social contexts.
72. The United Nations should call for a serious commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity, urging policy and institutional changes to ensure that diversity is valued and promoted.
73. The United Nations should encourage and ensure the meaningful participation of minority groups in United Nations policy development and in the annual Forum on Minority Issues.
74. The United Nations, through the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, should encourage the engagement of minority groups within the major groups and other stakeholders structure to ensure their engagement in the Summit of the Future and their input on the Pact for the Future.

75. The United Nations should take measures to introduce a minority issues adviser function within United Nations country teams to support the human rights and gender advisers.

76. The United Nations should consider the creation of a legally binding treaty on the rights of persons belonging to minority groups with an associated monitoring mechanism.

VII. Recommendations for ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minority groups towards cohesive societies

77. States should encourage the creation of digital platforms specifically dedicated to content produced in the languages of minority groups.

78. States should collaborate with technology companies to develop tools and features that support content creation in the languages of minority groups.

79. States should establish funding mechanisms or grants to support content creators working in the languages of minority groups, in particular those from regions lacking financial resources.

80. States should implement and enforce strict measures to penalize attacks on content creators based on their language in order to promote a safe and inclusive digital environment.

81. States should explore innovative business models to make the creation of digital content in the languages of minority groups economically viable.

82. States should provide incentives for companies and advertisers to invest in platforms that promote linguistic diversity.

83. States should advocate extending the duration and frequency of United Nations forums addressing the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic and religious minority groups.

84. States should ensure the alignment of initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals so that those initiatives contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and leave no minority group behind.

85. States should propose and support the adoption of power-sharing models at the State level to protect and include minority groups.

86. States should implement a multifaceted approach involving legislative measures, educational initiatives and cultural understanding in order to build a healthy, inclusive society.

87. States should strengthen and enforce anti-discrimination laws to protect the rights of persons belonging to minority groups and ensure equal opportunities for all citizens.

88. States should develop and implement educational programmes that celebrate diversity, teach tolerance and break down stereotypes, thereby fostering cultural awareness.

89. States should emphasize the importance of free and full participation by minority groups in efforts to achieve equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation in cohesive societies.

90. States should work to ensure the adequate application of laws and the creation of effective mechanisms to organize immigration, guarantee human rights and contribute to building an egalitarian and free society.

91. States should advocate a comprehensive review of the modalities of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Permanent Forum on People of

African Descent to ensure that future reforms consider the representation of minority groups.

92. States should promote the development of legislation and policies in which minority groups are explicitly mentioned. This includes measures that go beyond non-discrimination to incorporate provisions on cultural rights and the active participation of minority groups in decision-making processes.

93. States should recognize the dialectic between universality and specificity when addressing minority issues within a human rights framework and acknowledge the importance of understanding that universal principles do not imply uniformity, with a view to recognizing and respecting the unique rights and challenges faced by minority groups.

94. States should engage further in enhancing the socioeconomic inclusion of persons belonging to minority groups.

95. States should encourage the sharing of successful practices at the regional and international levels in order to promote the effective participation of minority groups in social and economic life.

96. States should create policies that ensure equal access to public goods and services without discrimination as a necessary condition for the effective social and economic participation of persons belonging to minority groups.

97. States should develop education systems, including for vocational training, to ensure equal access for everyone to opportunities to acquire the skills necessary for effective participation in the economy, citizenship and residence.

98. States should value the importance of recognizing the rights of persons belonging to minority groups beyond the right to non-discrimination and adopt a comprehensive approach in order to address the full spectrum of such rights.

99. The United Nations should encourage Governments to implement quota systems to guarantee the fair representation, inclusion and protection of minority groups at all levels of government.

100. The United Nations should secure increased financial support for persons belonging to minority groups, in particular those from the Middle East and North Africa, to ensure their meaningful participation in United Nations intergovernmental processes, meetings, events and forums, including the Forum on Minority Issues.

101. The United Nations should ensure the inclusion of minority groups in the planned outcome document of the Summit of the Future, namely, the Pact for the Future, acknowledging the vital role of digital inclusion in promoting cultural rights, combating hate speech and ensuring equal economic opportunities for minority groups.

102. The United Nations should propose the development of a global digital compact that explicitly addresses issues relating to the rights of persons belonging to minority groups, emphasizing the need for digital inclusion to safeguard cultural rights, combat hate speech and promote equal economic opportunities for minority groups.

103. The United Nations should promote cooperation among States based on strict observance of international law and principles in order to facilitate the realization of the economic rights of persons belonging to minority groups.
