

FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

“MINORITY REPRESENTATION AND SELF-REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC SPACES AND DISCOURSES”

28-29 NOVEMBER 2024

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA

SUMMARY BY THE CHAIR OF THE FORUM

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 19/23 of 23 March 2012, the Forum on Minority Issues provides a platform for promoting dialogue and co-operation on issues pertaining to persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as thematic contributions and expertise to the work of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, **Prof. Nicolas Levrat**. The Forum identifies and analyses best practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives for the further implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

The Forum meets annually for two days, on a different theme each year. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues is responsible for guiding the work of the Forum, preparing its annual meetings and reporting on its thematic recommendations to the Human Rights Council. The seventeenth session of the Forum took place on 28 and 29 November 2024 as an in-person event at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. **Ms. Anastasia Crickley** was appointed as Co-Chair of the session, which focused on the theme: “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”.

About 790 participants from some 96 countries registered for the Forum, including representatives of Member States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and mechanism in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, academics and experts on minority issues, representatives of minorities and minority and non-governmental organizations. In addition to the Forum, 16 side-events addressing different issues were organized by various stakeholders.¹ Interpretation in six official UN languages and in international sign language was provided during the Forum, as well as captioning in English, French and Spanish. The Concept Note, the Agenda of the Forum and the Programme of Work were made available to all Forum participants in advance of the

¹ See the programme of the side events here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/forums/minority-issues/session17/programme-side-events-FMI-2024.pdf>

Forum on the webpage of the Seventeenth session of the Forum.² These documents formed the basis for the discussions.

Format of the Forum

The Forum followed the procedure developed over its previous sessions. To help focus the discussions and ensure that they would be interactive, each agenda item was introduced by several invited panellists, followed by interventions from the participants.

Outcome documents

The present document has been prepared in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 19/23, which requests the Chair to prepare “a summary of the discussion of the Forum, to be made available to all participants of the Forum”. This summary is to be complemented by the outcome document containing the recommendations of the Forum presented by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to the Human Rights Council at its 58th session in March 2025.³

This summary does not provide the full details of all presentations that were made during the Forum’s proceedings. The list of speakers and the integral version of the statements submitted to the Secretariat of the Forum on Minority Issues can be accessed on the Forum’s webpage.⁴ The list of recommendations of the Forum will be published in the report presented by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to the Human Rights Council.

Opening of the Forum

The following panelists provided the opening remarks of the Forum: H.E. Mr. Omar Zniber, President of the Human Rights Council; Mr. Volker Türk, High Commissioner for Human Rights (pre-recorded video); Prof. Nicolas Levrat, Special Rapporteur on minority issues; and Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the seventeenth session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues.⁵

The **President of the Human Rights Council H.E. Mr. Omar Zniber** delivered welcoming remarks, praising the Forum as a unique platform for addressing issues related to the enjoyment of human rights by minorities through dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders. He highlighted this year’s theme, which focuses on “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”. This timely topic addresses the portrayal of minorities, often tainted by bias and negative stereotypes, which hinder social integration. Furthermore, he noted that there are inspiring examples of minorities taking charge of their narratives, engaging in self-representation, and breaking down these harmful

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2024/seventeenth-session-forum-minorities-issues>

³ A/HRC/58/69

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2024/seventeenth-session-forum-minorities-issues>

⁵ The integral version of the statements can be consulted on the Human Rights Council Extranet here: <https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCMechanisms/ForumMinority/Pages/17th-session.aspx>.

stereotypes, fostering recognition of their significant contributions to society. The President recalled that the Council has taken significant action to ensure that minority issues and minority rights remain firmly on the Council's agenda, including annual discussions on progress promoting the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities, the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and the establishment of the Forum on minority issues. He encouraged participants to engage actively over the two days, contributing to shape and strengthen recommendations that advance the promotion and protection of minority rights.

The **High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Volker Türk** emphasized the fundamental role of diversity in enriching life, comparing it to biodiversity, which strengthens ecosystems and sustains human existence. He noted that diversity fosters progress in science, art, and society, while homogeneity leads to stagnation. Minorities, integral to this diversity, must be protected, a mission the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues has championed for 17 years. He underlined that the Forum focuses on essential questions: how minorities are represented, who tells their stories, and how societies can give them a voice. The High Commissioner highlighted the dangers of denying minorities representation, which leads to invisibility, prevents them from participating in society, perpetuates stereotypes, fuels prejudice, and incites hostility. He condemned scapegoating minorities as counterproductive and part of the politics of distraction, stressing that minority rights are human rights and that we must listen to persons belonging to minorities. The High Commissioner urged States to ensure minority groups' effective participation in public spaces and their fair representation. He called on traditional and social media platforms to enable minorities to share their stories while prioritizing human rights and combating hate speech. He emphasized that inclusive societies are more vibrant and creative, diverse economies are more prosperous and resilient, and States that protect the rights of minorities are more peaceful and stable. Protecting minority rights benefits everyone. To conclude, the High Commissioner urged participants to maximize the Forum's potential and lead the way towards more inclusive, just, and equal societies.

The **Special Rapporteur on minority issues Prof. Nicolas Levrat** expressed gratitude to the Chair, Ms. Anastasia Crickley, for accepting the challenging role on short notice. He also acknowledged the President of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for their support. With 790 registered participants this year, the highest ever, he praised the Forum's role in engaging diverse voices while lamenting the limited time for comprehensive discussions and the unmet demand for an extended or permanent Forum. He highlighted the alarming global rollback of human rights, emphasizing the increased vulnerabilities of persons belonging to minorities, who often face discrimination and scapegoating during such crises. Against this grim backdrop, he noted that the Forum's focus on "Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses" was framed as essential for shaping perceptions that guide actions and policies. The Special Rapporteur stressed that fair representation is crucial, encompassing both state-driven equitable measures and strengthened self-representation of minorities to counter

stigmatization and promote their contributions to society. Representation in public spaces, education, media, and arts and culture was underscored as vital to fostering recognition of minorities as integral to cohesive, diverse societies. He called for a dual approach: on the one hand, States must ensure that persons belonging to minority groups enjoy equal rights; on the other hand, the portrayal of minorities in public spaces and discourses is indispensable for acknowledging the positive contribution of minorities to society as a whole. Drawing on the self-representation of minorities, he argued, would ensure respect and combat racism, stigmatization and inferiorization. The Special Rapporteur urged participants to provide clear, actionable recommendations to the Human Rights Council. While acknowledging the Forum's role as a platform for all minority voices to be heard at the UN, he stressed the importance of balancing this with producing impactful recommendations to strengthen the Forum's relevance within the UN human rights framework.

Opening the Forum, the **Chair of the seventeenth session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues Ms. Anastasia Crickley** said that it was her privileges to be in the role and to hear the perspective of people from around the world on the challenging issues facing minorities and those who seek to progress their rights as articulated in UN treaties, national laws and regional and multi-lateral arrangements. She emphasized that the commitment to aligning the human rights agenda with minority protection is a foundational principle of the UN, referencing the foundational role of the 1992 UN Declaration. She noted the Forum's crucial role, supported by the work of the Special Rapporteurs on minority issues, in promoting respect for minorities in all their diversities, which means respect for all and ultimately benefits all. Ms. Crickley underlined that the Forum sets out a dialogue where minorities can articulate how they want to be portrayed and to have their rights articulated and realised. While there are no simplistic solutions, progress can be achieved through practical actions grounded in human rights principles which UN member states should also adopt nationally. She highlighted the importance of intersectionality, especially regarding women, and stressed that access, participation, and representation must lead to targeted outcomes, enduring policies, and explicit inclusion of minority rights. Achieving this demands political will at all levels, including within the UN. A holistic approach is essential, involving minorities in at all levels in decision-making processes, supported by effective community development, clear targets, and timelines. While acknowledging the challenges, Ms. Crickley expressed optimism for the Forum's discussions on this year's theme, "Minority Representation and Self-Representation in Public Spaces and Discourses". To conclude, she drew attention on practical matters regarding the smooth running of the Forum.

Item 1: Minority representation in public spaces

Participants were invited to analyse how representations of minorities in public spaces reflect and shape national narratives and identities, including in street names, monuments and architecture, symbolically important celebrations and holidays, as well as memorial policies and practices in relation to minorities, and the representation of prominent figures from minority groups. Participants were requested to place specific emphasis on the participation of minorities in decisions relating to such representation and on the incorporation of a gender perspective.

Presentations on the topic under discussion were made by the following panellists: Ms. Ildikő Török, Programme Manager, Roma Rights and Citizenship Programme at Tom Lantos Institute; Ms. Ivonne González, Artist and Director of Association Noircir; and Prof. Frédéric Giraut, Professor, UNESCO Chair on Inclusive Toponymy “Naming the World” at the University of Geneva.

Ms. Ildikő Török emphasized that Roma, Europe’s largest ethnic minority group, have been integral to European society for centuries but have historically faced slavery, expulsion, and genocide. Today, they continue to endure widespread and systemic discrimination which permeates knowledge-production about the Roma in Europe. Referring to the articles of the UN Declaration on effective participation of minorities and the promotion and protection of their culture, Ms. Török presented a project by Tom Lantos Institute titled "Roma Representation in Public Spaces in Hungary," which was conceptualized and implemented by Roma experts. This initiative documents and promotes public representations of Roma people, such as statues, plaques, and murals. She noted that the project identified 200 public representations across Hungary and found that most focused on Roma music or the Holocaust. Despite this, the Roma community remains underrepresented in public spaces. Ms. Török concluded by advocating for greater participation of persons belonging to minorities in research and knowledge production on issues affecting them.

Ms. Ivonne González spoke about the lack of representation for minorities and marginalized groups in Swiss public spaces. She highlighted the absence of public monuments, art, or recognition for national minorities like the Yéniches, a community of 30,000 people. Similarly, non-European Swiss, Black, and Afro-descendant populations, who make up 25% of foreigners, are almost entirely invisible in public spaces. Ms. González underlined that, although Switzerland is composed of people from 180 countries, they are not represented in public spaces and cannot participate in decision-making. She proposed creating federal committees to give minimized communities a voice, partnering with associations, and developing training programs to amplify their contributions. She concluded by emphasizing her dedication as an artist to combating this invisibility through art in the public space and advocacy.

Prof. Frédéric Giraut addressed the invisibility of minority place names in public spaces and inclusive toponymy policies. He noted that minority place names include vernacular, Indigenous, regional, and community-derived names that reflect memory and identity, closely linked to issues related to colonization and gender. He underlined that progress includes multilingual signage, decolonization, feminization of street names, and initiatives like post-apartheid South Africa's participatory renaming projects. Yet, challenges persist, such as toponymic cleansing, the hegemony of majority languages, and homogenization through translation and standardization. Prof. Giraut addressed the opportunities presented by digital maps to promote alternative toponymy via platforms like Google Maps and collaborative tools. He recommended to adopt a charter of inclusive toponymic rights, involving digital cartography actors, and to create participatory vernacular inventories to complement official records and affirm the principle of toponymic non-hegemony in public spaces.

Interactive Dialogue

In the interactive dialogue, participants raised numerous concerns related to minority issues and presented various initiatives.

The issues raised included that, in many parts of the world, persons belonging to minorities experience killings, torture, persecution, (intersectional) discrimination and hate speech. They face assimilation policies leading to discrimination, erasure of their culture and history, misrepresentation, and violations of their right to use their language. The participants emphasized the link between colonisation and under-representation of persons belonging to minorities. They also underlined that the history of minorities is often erased from education textbooks and that places of worship should be available in public spaces. They noted that persons belonging to minorities are hindered from participating in decisions regarding representations in public spaces.

The participants presented initiatives to protect the religion, language, traditions, and cultural heritage of minority groups, highlighting that representations in public spaces are key for the identity of persons belonging to minorities. They noted the need to develop school materials and curriculum reflecting the existence and history of minorities, to teach minority histories and addressing past injustices, as well as to provide specific support for internally displaced and migrant children. The role of civil society, opportunities offered by new technologies, as well as the effective participation of minorities, including through self-representation, were of particular concern during the discussions. Examples of collaborative initiatives to promote the collective well-being were shared, as well as projects upholding minority contributions to society through art to create inclusive societies and reduce stereotypes. Several participants underlined their work toward the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and its significance for social cohesion. At the international level, participants advocated for the adoption of international instruments protecting minority rights.

Good examples were provided by Member States, such as the promotion of minority languages and customs, developing public spaces names as well as topographical and signage indications in minority languages based on extensive consultations, implementing education policies including education on minority cultures and in minority languages, celebrating minority religious holidays, creating radio programs in minority languages, and sponsoring events and festivals celebrating minority cultures.

Item 2: Minority representation in education

Participants were asked to discuss the portrayal of minorities in education, which plays a crucial role in shaping how minorities see themselves and how they are perceived by society. The discussions aimed to explore how minority students can effectively exercise their right to learn about their own history and culture, highlighting the significant role of education in ensuring intergenerational transmission and reducing intercommunal tensions. A central theme was the need for the active participation of minorities in shaping educational policies, ensuring that their perspectives are taken into account throughout the process.

Presentations on the topic under discussion were made by the following panellists: Ms. Jacqueline Hatch, Graduate Fellow of the George Washington University with the UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office; Prof. David Smith, Professor, Alex Nove Chair in Russian and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow; and Mr. Ignasi Grau Callizo, General Director of OIDEL.

Ms. Jacqueline Hatch underlined the role of UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education as the first legally binding instrument to define core elements of the right to education. She emphasized that the Convention defines discrimination broadly and specifically recognizes the rights of national minorities. It underscored the rights of national minorities to maintain their educational systems while ensuring integration into broader society. Ms. Hatch underscored UNESCO's initiative on the Evolving right to education with a focus on minority rights. In particular, findings from the 2023 report on "The right to education of minorities" highlighted the need for inclusive curricula, linguistic diversity, and intercultural education to address systemic exclusion of minority children and students, as well as the importance of local community involvement and targeted measures for disadvantaged groups within the educational process. She presented the launch of UNESCO's 11th Consultation on the implementation of the Convention in 2024 as a key opportunity to improve policies protecting minority rights.

Prof. David Smith highlighted the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) as Europe's most comprehensive treaty protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. The Advisory Committee monitors its implementation and makes recommendations, drawing on other Council of Europe

instruments. He explained that the FCNM reflects the 1992 UN Declaration and ensures minorities can express their identity, access resources equally, and engage in intercultural dialogue. Articles 12 and 14 specifically address education, promoting equal opportunities, minority language learning, and fostering mutual respect, whilst emphasizing effective minority participation in educational policy. Prof. Smith introduced the 2024 update of the Advisory Committee's Thematic Commentary No.1 on Education, stressing that the right to education should be understood as the right to high-quality and inclusive education. The revisions respond to societal changes, particularly increased diversity due to migration and persistent biases in curricula. He concluded by urging states to integrate minority histories and languages into mainstream education to build cohesive societies based on respect and diversity.

Mr. Ignasi Grau Callizo emphasized that the primary aim of education, as recognized in human rights treaties, is the full development of the human personality, which requires both knowing who we are and participating in a shared societal conversation. He noted that, for minorities, education must respect cultural and moral dimensions to foster identity, critical thinking, and intercultural dialogue. Neutrality alone is insufficient, as it often reflects a hegemonic culture that marginalizes minority perspectives and leads to discrimination. Ensuring educational pluralism allows families to pass on their cultural heritage. Mr. Grau Callizo recommended three measures: involving parents in the educational process, providing public funding for minority-led schools, and ensuring that curricula do not conflict with minority values.

Interactive Dialogue

In the interactive dialogue, participants raised numerous concerns related to minority issues and presented various initiatives.

The issues raised included, inter alia, the exclusion and segregation of persons belonging to minorities from the education and cultural systems, and the existence of assimilation policies which leads to the erosion of the cultural heritage of minorities and distorts the children's understanding of their own culture. These issues are reinforced for minority children facing intersectional discrimination such as minority children with disability. They also addressed the lack of anti-discrimination law preventing to address discrimination against minority students in educational settings, harassment and bullying, and the high rates of school drop out of minority students. Furthermore, they noted that, in some instances, the lack of identity documents prevent minority children to have access to education. The participants also addressed issues related to education and language rights such as the prohibition to use and teach minority languages in school. They underlined that such policies result in discrimination and the marginalisation of persons belonging to linguistic minorities.

The participants presented initiatives promoting linguistic pluralism in schools, the development of inclusive educational programs to ensure that minority communities have

access to education in their native language, and advocated for educational policies respectful of language diversity. The showcased initiatives also included advocacy to eliminate discriminatory practices in education and ensure access to education to all minority and Indigenous children, as well as projects aiming at preventing xenophobia and racism in education.

Good examples were provided by Member States and international organizations, such as the adoption of legislation guaranteeing the representation of national minorities in school and access to education in minority languages, the development of projects prioritizing quality education to persons belonging to minorities and notably Roma children, and legal protections for minority languages and cultural rights.

Item 3: Minority representation in the media, including social media

Under this item, participants were requested to explore the role of traditional and social media in shaping public perceptions of minorities, focusing on both challenges and opportunities that minorities face in portraying themselves in the media and social media. They were also invited to examine how minorities are often misrepresented through scapegoating, polarizing rhetoric, hate speech and disinformation campaigns, and to highlight examples of inclusive and positive media discourses.

Presentations on the topic under discussion were made by the following panellists: Ms. Nayat Karaköse, Director of Programs at Hrant Dink Foundation; Mr. Dimas Novais, Journalist and Content Researcher and Screenwriter at Globo; and Prof. John Nguyet Erni, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Chair Professor of Cultural Studies, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Ms. Nayat Karaköse addressed the issue of hate speech in the media, emphasizing its impact on minorities worldwide. She noted that hate speech manifests through racism, xenophobia, sexism, and other discriminatory narratives, portraying certain groups as threats. Since 2009, the Hrant Dink Foundation has identified a rise in targeted communities in Turkish media, now around 80 groups, with Jews, Armenians, Christians, Greeks, and Syrian refugees most affected. Hate speech appears in four main categories: distortion, insult, hostility, and symbolization. Ms. Karaköse underlined that media outlets should provide journalist training, establish ethical guidelines, and review content for hate speech. She highlighted initiatives such as developing AI tools to detect online hate speech and called to academia and civil society to participate in hate speech and algorithm monitoring, to ensure balanced approach between freedom of expression and protection against harmful discourse.

Mr. Dimas Novais highlighted the underrepresentation of Black people in Brazilian media, emphasizing systemic racism and social inequality. Despite Black Brazilians comprising 55% of the population, they face disparities in media, film, and advertising. He indicated that,

while diversity is central to Brazil's identity, media representation remains inadequate. Between 1995 and 2018, only 2% of major films were directed by Black men, and in 2022, no mainstream films were directed by women. However, progress is visible, especially in telenovelas and advertising. Mr. Novail shared initiatives like the Negritudes Globo Festival, which celebrates Black narratives and fosters inclusion. Stressing that representation benefits everyone, he called for collective action to drive lasting change in the media and society.

Prof. John Nguyet Erni highlighted the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, particularly South and Southeast Asians. Despite making up 8.4% of the population, persons belonging to these minorities often face stereotypes in mainstream media, reinforcing social exclusion and economic disparity. Sensationalist portrayals in TV and film depict them as criminals or comedic figures and reinforce negative stereotypes, with blackface and brownface still appearing in local productions. Prof. Erni explained that online racial discrimination intensified during the COVID-19 crisis, fostering hostility toward minorities. However, ethnic media and digital platforms have allowed minority voices to gain visibility, led by youths who engage in creative fields, using social media for self-representation and community building, articulating their hybrid identities.

Interactive Dialogue

In the interactive dialogue, participants raised numerous concerns related to minority issues and presented various initiatives.

The participants raised issues related to hate speech, underlining the continuum between hate speech and the discrimination and violence faced by persons belonging to minorities as well as the role of social media in encouraging society's polarization. They noted the role of the media in perpetuating scapegoating and negative stereotypes of minority groups through misinformation and misrepresentation, as persons belonging to minorities are often portrayed as violent or criminals. Furthermore, minorities are being excluded and invisibilised in the media, and are thus denied the opportunity to express their voice and share their culture. Participants from countries where the media landscape is controlled by the state, in particular, indicated that there is no space for diverse voices in their programmes. The participants also highlighted situations in which journalists investigating minority issues are harassed and have disappeared. Finally, they noted the potential of artificial intelligence and social media technology to worsen inequalities.

Initiatives were presented to encourage multilingual content and cultural diversity, especially in the media, to shape new narratives based on minorities' self-representation, and to overcome the silencing of persons belonging to minorities. The participants advocated for the development of artificial intelligence systems based on diversity and inclusion as core principles to prevent perpetuating biases. They also noted the importance of providing digital literacy training to minority groups.

Member States provided examples of good practices, such as representing national minority languages in public services, including television and radio programmes, and collaborating with local media outlets for the promotion of minority cultures and languages. Member States emphasized the importance of collaborating with the UN system to integrate and mainstream minority issues into UN mechanisms. They highlighted that financial resources should be allocated for textbooks, training, schools, and NGOs that represent minorities.

Item 4: Minority representation in art and culture

Participants were invited to address the representation of minorities in various forms of art and culture, and to evaluate the biases and prejudices that may be conveyed through these representations and their impact on shaping a collective imagination that fosters discrimination. Discussion under this item also aimed at assessing the opportunities for minorities to engage in their own cultural and traditional activities, as well as the importance of self-portrayal in empowering minorities and preventing cultural appropriation, ensuring that their voices and stories are authentically represented.

Presentations on the topic under discussion were made by the following panellists: Ms. Bianca Battle Nguema, Artist and Laureate of the 2023 International Contest for Minority Artists; Dr. Gülsah Stapel and Ms. Müge Avar, Co-Founders of the TAM Museum; and Ms. Fatma Serag, Secretary-General of Kandaka Heritage and Comprehensive Development Association.

Ms. Bianca Battle Nguema provided a critique of the lack of representation in art and the dominance of white perspectives in visual culture. She highlighted how Black people have historically symbolized modernity and sexuality in music, sports, and entertainment but have been marginalized in fine art. She also emphasized that African and Afro-descendant artists face financial barriers and exclusion from major art fairs and galleries, which remain overwhelmingly white. Ms. Battle Nguema called for a shift in power, stating that while minorities are discussed, they are not given actual decision-making roles. She argued that cultural appropriation and performative inclusivity persist. Questioning the Forum's effectiveness and expressing skepticism about her presence there, she advocated to give up the chair, change the format, and take real action instead of symbolic discussions.

Dr. Gülsah Stapel and **Ms. Müge Avar** emphasized the need for a new museum in Germany to challenge the dominant narrative surrounding Turkish minorities. They highlighted how stories shape identity and belonging, warning against the dangers of a "single story" that paints Turkish-Germans as perpetual "guest workers" painting them as perpetual newcomers. Museums, rather than dismantling these reductive narratives, often reinforce them. Dr. Stapel and Ms. Avar stressed the urgency of challenging the dominant discourse, especially in the face of rising far-right movements. They explained that the TAM Museum in

Berlin was founded to deconstruct exclusionary narratives and celebrate transcultural identities, and called on cultural institutions to embrace diverse voices and shift from explaining identities to exploring them. Finally, they proposed establishing a global network to challenge the "single story" and promote pluralism through art, museums, and culture.

Ms. Fatma Serag highlighted the importance of preserving the heritage and culture of Indigenous communities, particularly the Nubians, who have faced historical marginalization. Nubians, residing between southern Egypt and northern Sudan, possess an ancient civilization with a rich cultural heritage, including poetry, music, dance, handicrafts, and architecture. She explained that, despite its significance, Nubian culture is often reduced to stereotypes in Egypt, and the Nubian language faces decline due to the absence of educational support. Ms. Serag urged the Egyptian government to recognize minority rights, promote cultural diversity, and implement international conventions. She concluded by honoring Nubian women for preserving traditions and expressed hope that the Forum will drive justice and positive change for guardians of cultural heritage.

Interactive Dialogue

In the interactive dialogue, participants raised numerous concerns related to minority issues and presented various initiatives.

The issues raised included situations of criminalisation of persons belonging to minorities who are living according to their culture and traditions. The participants referred to threats against minority art and culture, incidents of attacks against cultural events and festivals showcasing the cultural heritage and identity of minorities, the depravation of traditional skills and knowledge, and assimilationist policies leading to the loss of minorities' cultures and identities

The participants presented initiatives to ensure that minorities have their own platforms to share their stories, to encourage the development of festivals and cultural manifestations where persons belonging to minorities can express themselves and bring visibility to their culture. They presented projects aimed at reinforcing knowledge transmission across generations and borders, as well as initiatives involving migrants and especially migrant children, and applying a decolonial approach.

Good practices were shared by Member States to enhance equality between all citizens through social and cultural programmes and to allocate sufficient funding for the development of programmes specifically dedicated to minorities.

Concluding remarks

In his concluding remarks, the **Special Rapporteur on minority issues Prof. Nicolas Levrat** acknowledged the smooth functioning of the Forum on minority issues and thanked all participants for their contributions. While he noted that improvements to the current format

of the Forum are possible, he highlighted the Forum's singular aspects within the UN human rights system, such as broad civil society access, equal speaking time for states and NGOs, and non-hierarchical seating arrangements. He appreciated the strong participation of both civil society organizations and state representatives, emphasizing the challenges faced by civil society to participate in the Forum as well as the importance for Member States to listen to the discussions. While some States heard challenging perspectives, he reminded them of the role of the Special Procedures, including through country visits, in verifying facts about minority rights. Addressing questions about his legitimacy as a Special Rapporteur due to being a white male, Prof. Levrat asserted that legitimacy should be judged by his work's outcomes. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur recalled key statements from Member States, such as the Russian Federation's support for minority rights as the foundation for the peaceful coexistence of states and peoples, and Hungary's multilateral approach to minority issues. He also mentioned that Bangladesh's representatives describe the Government's openness to journalists investigating human rights concerns and expressed his willingness to undertake a country visit. Summarizing some key recommendations from the panellists and from the floor, he underscored the importance of preserving diverse societies, the need for transparency to address new technologies' role in perpetuating discrimination against persons belonging to minorities, and equal dignity for all minority groups. Concluding, he expressed gratitude to the Secretariat, the Chair, and the interpreters, and invited ongoing engagement with his mandate throughout the year.

The **Chairperson of the Forum Ms. Anastasia Crickley**, expressed gratitude to the interpreters, signers, security, and those behind the scenes of the Forum who participated in the smooth running of the session. She also thanked all participants for their cooperation and flexibility. Ms. Crickley emphasized the value of the space provided by the Forum, encouraging the UN to continue to support it in a sustainable way that would provide more opportunities for diverse participation, particularly for individuals and organizations unable to attend due to visa or resource challenges. She called for the UN to continue supporting safe spaces for dialogue, urging everyone to prioritize safety and avoid actions that could endanger participants, notably through reprisals. Underlining that theme of the Forum on minority representation and self-representation is both important and timely, she stressed the importance of respecting the rights of minorities, especially in public spaces, and expressed appreciation for the contributions of panellists throughout the Forum. She highlighted the need for political will at all levels to implement the actions discussed, advocating for listening and thinking outside the box to address challenges in a new way. She thanked the participating states for their participation and willingness to ensure that the conditions for the Forum to facilitate inclusion of diverse and challenging views were created and maintained. In closing, Ms. Crickley emphasized the importance of intersectional approaches and greater representation from other entities, such as various UN agencies, underrepresented regional groups, and local authorities. She called for the ongoing and targeted responses which human rights issues need to be stepped up at this challenging time as well as for the mainstreaming of

efforts which reshape society in ways which are inclusive of minorities in all their diversity. Finally, she thanked the audience for their patience and support before concluding with a warm farewell in Gaelic.