

International Contest for Minority Artists

Thank you Madame Chair. We speak today as eight minority artists, with different languages, histories, and wounds. From our Roma neighborhoods, indigenous communities, islands facing storms, and periods of displacement we share the same struggle to belong, to be heard, to survive, and to create without fear. The right to artistic freedom should be a fundamental right, guarding our identity. Yet, we face censorship, displacement, disappearance, and war. The right to artistic freedom must guard our memory. However, our dance, music, storytelling, and traditional crafts face erasure. The right to artistic freedom must guard our existence, and as an adjunct to this existence, nature plays an integral role. Water, fire, and soil are relatives, holding stories older than nation-states. Showing our work here in Geneva affirms that our stories matter, our perspectives belong, and our visions for justice are necessary. It shows us, to use the words of Justice Peter [inaudible], that even though we are not you, we are, at the same time, not other than you. Therefore, we call for action by the UN system and Human Rights Council to recognize arts as a human rights documentation tool, to ensure minority artists at risk are protected, funded, and heard in decision-making spaces, and to create permanent platforms for minority art in this Forum. We urge states to protect freedom of expression without censorship, and to cease environmental destruction on minority lands, recognizing it as a human rights violation. And to everyone in this room, let us see minority artists, not as decoration, but experts, because when art is visible, dignity becomes visible [cut off by Chair].