

PM of Austria

Thank you Madame Chair.

We thank the OHCHR and Secretariat for organizing the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Forum on Minority Issues, and welcome this year's focus on the contribution of minorities to diverse, resilient, and peaceful societies. In Austria, the federal constitution affirms the deeply rooted linguistic and cultural diversity embodied in its national minority groups, namely the Burgenland Croats, Roma, Slovenes, Hungarians, Czechs, and Slovaks. The languages, cultures, and future preservation must be respected, protected, and actively promoted. Members of the national minorities have the same rights as any Austrian citizen, however, there are a number of laws and regulations, which contain specific provisions related to the national minorities and their languages, such as the National Minorities Act. The National Minorities Act also provides the legal basis for a number of funding instruments that are intended to ensure the financing of national minority organizations and their initiatives. This includes the funding approach for cultural projects, which aims to promote social coexistence between national minorities and the majority population, disseminates knowledge of their history and culture, reduces prejudice, and facilitates dialogues at various levels. Respectful and appreciative treatment of differences in cultures in everyday life can also be a valuable resource for society, while practicing different languages is a way to express identity for the many national minority groups. Learning these languages can also be a valuable experience for the majority population. Multilingualism should be seen as a contributing value, not as a barrier. In closing, let me reiterate that Austria continues to support the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and to provide financial support to this Forum, and calls on others to do the same. Furthermore, in 2026, Austria and Slovenia will present a resolution at the Human Rights Council with the thematic focus of this year's Forum. Thank you.