

Finland

Mr Chairperson. It is only commendable that the Council has chosen to focus on youth affairs. Finland aligns itself with a statement by the European Commission which I'm sure is coming up. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities provides general guidance to the protection of minorities in Finland. The objectives and principles enshrined in the Declaration are turned into concrete actions through various legislative policy and practical measures.

A prerequisite for the improvement of the status of minorities, and in particular youth, is that they themselves are involved in decision-making processes. Here are a few examples from Finland that could be taken as recommendations in advancing youth rights.

First, in Finland, the Youth Act and the Municipalities Act obliges the central government and municipalities to uphold the youth's right to participation and to be heard in preparatory and decision-making processes.

An example is an online public participation and petition platform for young people that is maintained under the Ministry of Justice. Second, The Youth Act ascertains that young people have the right to be heard in cases and proceedings that personally concern them. Third, in schools, it is stipulated by law that a student democratically elected body should be established that encourages and furthers collaboration between students and their education provider.

At a national level, I'd like to bring to your attention an advisory board of ethnic relations called Ethno, which is a government-formed body that ascertains the right by different minority groups to be heard in decision-making and preparatory processes. This model is available for all who are interested to know more about it and highly encourage that it is taken up as a recommendation. Thank you very much.