



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forum on Minority Issues

#### Fifteenth session

1 and 2 December 2022

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

#### Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

## Provisional agenda and annotations\*

### Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
2. Review: normative frameworks and the mainstreaming of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities at the United Nations.
3. Rethink: minority rights defenders and their role in promoting the principles of the Declaration.
4. Reform: filling the gaps in the implementation of the human rights of minorities.
5. Open dialogue: urgent situations faced by minorities
6. Concluding remarks.

### Annotations

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

##### *Dates and venue*

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 6/15 and 19/23, the fifteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues will be held on 1 and 2 December 2022. Meetings will be held in Room XX of the Palais des Nations at Geneva.

Documents for the session will be made available on the web page of the Forum.<sup>1</sup>

##### *Opening of the session*

The President of the Human Rights Council will deliver an opening statement, which will be followed by statements from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Chair of the Forum and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

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\* Agreement was reached to publish the present document after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

<sup>1</sup> [www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2022/fifteenth-session-forum-minority-issues](http://www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2022/fifteenth-session-forum-minority-issues).



*Panel discussions*

During the two-day session, participants will be invited to contribute to four panel discussions organized under the theme “Review, rethink, reform: thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities”. Each panel discussion will be introduced briefly by experts. In order to include greater regional input, recommendations emanating from four regional forums, held in 2022 in the regions of the Americas, Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia, and organized by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, in coordination with the Tom Lantos Institute, will also be considered.

Recommendations emanating from the panel discussions will be included in the outcome document that the Special Rapporteur will present to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-second session.

**2. Review: normative frameworks and the mainstreaming of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities at the United Nations**

Under this item, the Forum will review the scope of the Declaration, the groups that it covers, and those that it leaves behind, and ways in which the scope of the normative framework can be made more relevant and effective.

The Declaration, adopted in 1992, remains the only global instrument for the protection of minority rights. It reinforces and builds on the rights enshrined in the United Nations human rights framework and is centred on protecting and promoting the existence, equality, identity and effective participation of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in all areas covered by the Declaration. Participants will consider the degree to which the Declaration has enabled progress to be achieved in protecting minority rights globally. In his statement<sup>2</sup> to the high-level meeting to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration, on 21 September 2022, the Secretary-General said: “The hard truth is that, 30 years on, the world is falling short. Far short.”

As the Special Rapporteur on minority issues pointed out in the concept notes prepared for the four regional forums held in 2022, the Declaration must be better understood, acknowledged and implemented. The Forum will aim to identify best practices and developments from international and regional bodies that present useful models for securing a more effective normative framework.

Under this item, participants will be encouraged to take a fresh look at mainstreaming the Declaration and the human rights of minorities within the United Nations system. Participants will consider the findings of the Special Rapporteur set out in his report to the General Assembly,<sup>3</sup> and share their views on the evolution and positioning of the Declaration in the institutions, structures and initiatives of the United Nations.

**3. Rethink: minority rights defenders and their role in promoting the principles of the Declaration**

Under this item, the Forum will aim to identify challenges faced by minority rights defenders, in particular women minority rights defenders, best practices and ways to advance defenders’ work in promoting the realization of the Declaration and bringing the principles of the Declaration into practice. Discussions will spotlight the contributions of minority activists in achieving human rights for all.

Participants will consider the multidimensional challenges faced by human rights defenders belonging to minority groups, some of which have been extensively reflected upon by the Special Rapporteur,<sup>4</sup> with a view to elaborating sustainable solutions.

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and](https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and).

<sup>3</sup> [A/77/246](#).

<sup>4</sup> See [A/HRC/40/60](#), [A/HRC/43/51](#) and [A/HRC/46/35](#).

Participants will be invited to draw from the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights,<sup>5</sup> in which he offered a blueprint for all Governments to address long-standing issues of discrimination, including through partnerships with the grass-roots leadership of affected communities. Participants will share their views about building partnerships in support of and with minority leaders, especially minority women and young people, and will reflect on the role of the United Nations, international and regional organizations, States and donor organizations in building the capacity of civil society organizations representing minority groups for monitoring, advocacy and promoting the realization of their human rights.

Participants will take stock of the situation of the civic space for minority groups, which has been highlighted in a number of Human Rights Council resolutions, including Council resolutions 32/31 and 38/12. Discussions will be centred on the means to protect and enlarge civic space for minority groups and to enhance civic participation among minorities.

Participants will be encouraged to provide recommendations for addressing, preventing and reporting cases of reprisals against minority representatives who are cooperating with the United Nations to advance the implementation of the Declaration. Human rights defenders from minority groups are at the forefront of protecting and promoting the human rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups – and they too need protection.

As noted by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, intimidation and reprisals disproportionately affect certain populations and groups of victims and human rights defenders whose cases are under-reported.<sup>6</sup> The Secretary-General has also acknowledged that minority representatives are among those who are disproportionately affected by reprisals.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4. Reform: filling the gaps in the implementation of the human rights of minorities**

Under this item, the Forum will consider ways to eliminate the persisting gaps in the implementation of the Declaration and means to achieve tangible progress. The Secretary-General has said: “We are not dealing with gaps – we are dealing with outright inaction and negligence in the protection of minority rights.”<sup>8</sup> Participants will also consider how pre-existing obstacles, which were expanded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, have made the implementation gaps even wider, in particular for women belonging to minority groups.

Participants will take into consideration the conclusions of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, who in his reports has pointed out that minorities are more than three quarters of the world's stateless and that their numbers are increasing,<sup>9</sup> that minorities in many countries are disproportionately the targets of hate speech and hate crimes,<sup>10</sup> that there are growing restrictions on, and even prohibition from, being educated in their own languages<sup>11</sup> and that, in most violent conflicts in recent decades, minorities have faced the exclusion or denial of their rights or their grievances being instrumentalized by outside forces for geopolitical reasons.<sup>12</sup>

While developing their suggestions on filling the gaps, participants will also be invited to consider the Special Rapporteur's recent report, in which he urged the Human Rights Council to initiate a study on how to strengthen the protection of minority rights, including through a new United Nations treaty, and how to operationalize the Secretary-General's call, in 2013, to mainstream and integrate minority rights across all pillars and activities of the United

<sup>5</sup> See [www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/index.shtml).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2022/09/oral-presentation-assistant-secretary-general-human-rights-report>.

<sup>7</sup> See [A/HRC/51/47](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/51/47).

<sup>8</sup> See [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and](http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-09-21/secretary-generals-remarks-the-high-level-meeting-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-adoption-of-the-declaration-rights-of-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic-religious-and).

<sup>9</sup> See [A/HRC/40/64](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/40/64).

<sup>10</sup> See [A/HRC/46/57](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/46/57).

<sup>11</sup> See [A/HRC/43/47](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/43/47).

<sup>12</sup> See [A/HRC/49/46](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/49/46).

Nations, and urged the United Nations system to reactivate and implement the integration of minority rights into its work at the global, regional and country levels.<sup>13</sup>

Wide-reaching discussions with the participation of minorities are needed on the ways forward and on the means of advancing the protection of the human rights of minorities. Participants will consider: whether additional instruments at the international or regional levels are needed, whether existing norms should be strengthened through better implementation, oversight and enforcement, whether businesses or other international economic institutions, including development aid, should be better included in the efforts to protect the rights of minorities, the role of the media in the protection and promotion of minority rights, and in addressing the gaps in the minority protection regime identified during the two days of discussions of the Forum, and how the Declaration can be used to respond to the new challenges that have appeared since its adoption. The Forum welcomes innovative proposals for developing measures to address the ever-increasing gaps at the international, regional and national levels.

**5. Open dialogue: urgent situations faced by minorities**

Recognizing that, since its establishment 15 years ago, the Forum on Minority Issues has been a unique platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues affecting persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups, under this item, the Forum welcomes constructive exchanges and the sharing of information on issues of urgent concern.

**6. Concluding remarks**

The Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues will make concluding remarks, drawing on the outcomes of the two days of discussion and including proposals for follow-up steps to be taken by all Forum participants.

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<sup>13</sup> See [A/77/246](#).

## Annex

### Programme of work of the fifteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues

<i>Date/time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Programme</i>
<b>Thursday, 1 December 2022</b>		
10 a.m.–1 p.m.	1. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work	Opening of the Forum on Minority Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and opening remarks by the President of the Human Rights Council</li> <li>• Remarks by the President of the General Assembly</li> <li>• Remarks by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</li> <li>• Remarks by the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe</li> <li>• Remarks by the Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues</li> <li>• Remarks by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues</li> </ul>
	2. Review: normative frameworks and the mainstreaming of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities at the United Nations	Panel discussion
3–6 p.m.	3. Rethink: minority rights defenders and their role in promoting the principles of the Declaration	Panel discussion
<b>Friday, 2 December 2022</b>		
10 a.m.–1 p.m.	4. Reform: filling the gaps in the implementation of the human rights of minorities	Panel discussion
3–6 p.m.	5. Open dialogue: urgent situations faced by minorities	Open discussion
	6. Concluding remarks	