



### Item 5: Minority youth: agents of change for peace and stability

Thank you. I am speaking on behalf of the UNPO, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. Our members are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognized or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments, and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts which affect them. We provide a platform for them to advocate their causes before the international community. We represent more than 40 different nations and peoples worldwide and in all cases we see minorities and their youths facing discrimination and impediments to their full potential to serve as the agents of change and peace of the future. This becomes especially evident with the oppression of their distinct languages, with the suppression of cultural and religious traditions, in some cases even the prohibition on the use of certain names and the discrimination that follows as a result.

Forbidding students to study in their native languages adds additional hurdles for the youth in their access to education, and hinders them from reaching their full potential. The discrimination minority youths face in the job sector due to their accents, cultural background or religion only exacerbates these challenges.

We hear States justify universal language and cultural programs as an effort to integrate youths into a more “global generation”- yet there is no substantial nor universal proof to justify that the expansion of universal languages & globalization must come at the expense of ancestral identities.

Indeed, each language not only holds a fascinating way of thinking but also is a key to upholding the right to education that has been asserted by international conventions. If we want to provide all minority youth of this generation with an opportunity to act as the agents of change for peace and stability that **our world desperately need** - we need to address the barriers to education and the underlying causes to the discrimination endured by minority youths.

We urge States to take responsibility for the true impacts of their policies and the barriers that they have created - intentionally or not, and for the international community to open its eyes to the reality of these policies and not only the theoretical intentions of its policy makers.

To conclude, we would like to praise all the youth who travelled from all around the world to participate in these two days of Minority Forum: you are agents of peace and stability. I would also like to praise the Minority Organisations in which leadership found the courage to step aside and let their youth come instead and speak on behalf of their communities. It is a pity that due to the time constraint and in some cases to instrumental interruptions some of them have not been able to express themselves in full. Thank you.