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Open discussion

FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES, 5<sup>th</sup> Session

Effective political participation

Presentated by: Mabruka Sebit and Rasha Qass  
2012 OHCHR Minorities Fellowship Programme

Madam Chairperson,  
Madam Independent Expert,  
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Ensuring political participation at all levels is important and crucial for young human rights defenders. As young activists, we are raising our voices against discrimination, and we need to be allowed to participate effectively in the political processes.

Through effective participation persons belonging to a minority community can express their identity. As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Minorities Declaration, we should focus on achieving true implementation of its provisions.

We, minority youth representatives, today call upon all the participants of the Forum to find new and effective ways to implement the Declaration. Young minority women should be a special focus, as they are particularly underrepresented in public life.

Parliaments and other representative bodies should reflect the diversity of the population and their composition should not leave minorities feel disadvantaged or excluded. This can be achieved through building true partnerships, educating the new generation of human rights defenders on the importance of observing minority rights.

The Declaration provides clear guidelines and minorities should use it as a shield to protect and promote their rights at all levels.

**But the Declaration needs more visibility, therefore:**

- 1 • We call upon stakeholders to improve its visibility by preparing specific tools, including simplified versions of the Declaration in the languages spoken in their countries.
- 2 • Social media such as Facebook and Twitter should be used more in order to increase knowledge about the Declaration and awareness of minority rights among the youth.
- 3 • Building resource centres can also help create more awareness on minority issues. We should not only target minorities. The society needs to better understand minority issues, their contribution and the importance of creating a just and equal society.

We hope the effective participation of minorities can be strengthened also by:

- 1 • Effective political participation among the youth and minority communities should be constantly measured at all levels of society to ensure they participate in decision making and come up with home grown solutions.
- and 2 • Governments should raise awareness on issues related to political participation among the youth and minorities and develop tools to promote the inclusion of youth in political decision-making.

Thank you.