



General Assembly

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Human Rights Council

Forum on Minority Issues

Ninth session

24 and 25 November 2016

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Provisional agenda and annotations

Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
2. Legal framework and key concepts.
3. Respecting minority rights as a means of preventing or mitigating the impact of humanitarian crises.
4. Protecting minority rights during humanitarian crises.
5. Recovering from a crisis: ensuring durable solutions.
6. Concluding remarks.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

Venue

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 6/15 and 19/23, the ninth session of the Forum on Minority Issues will be held on 24 and 25 November 2016 in Geneva (Palais des Nations, room XX).

The Forum on Minority Issues will have before it the provisional agenda contained in the present document to consider for adoption. The programme of work for the session is contained in the annex.

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Opening meeting

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

Documentation

In addition to being distributed to participants in hard copy, the documents for the session will be made available on the website of the Human Rights Council (www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session9.aspx).

Discussions

Participants will have the opportunity to make brief presentations and comments on the draft recommendations before them. After the presentations introducing the topics to be discussed under each agenda item, all participants will be invited to contribute to an open discussion. Participants should indicate their interest in speaking by adding their names to a sign-up sheet at the beginning of each session.

2. Legal framework and key concepts

At the ninth session, participants will review provisions of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, refugee law and disaster law relevant to the respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of minorities in situations of humanitarian crisis. Through the presentations and discussions, participants will seek to propose ways to bridge gaps between international standards and national legislation and implementation. They will also discuss the role of legal and policy frameworks for increasing the accountability of international humanitarian actors towards affected populations, including minorities, while recognizing existing commitments and systems such as those in place for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Participants will discuss how international and regional principles and standards pertaining to minorities, such as the fundamental right to equality and non-discrimination and the rights to the protection of their existence, to the promotion of their identity and to an effective and meaningful participation, can best be reflected in the development of national and international humanitarian relief programmes.

3. Respecting minority rights as a means of preventing or mitigating the impact of humanitarian crises

Participants will identify and discuss key factors that lead to humanitarian crises — such as those resulting from conflicts, natural and man-made disasters and pandemics — having a disproportionate impact on minority groups. At the ninth session, participants will examine how that disproportionate impact on minority communities could be avoided or mitigated through thorough and participative planning and contingency plans.

Acknowledging the strong link between peace, stability and the protection and promotion of minority rights, participants will also explore how the respect, protection and fulfilment of minority rights can contribute to the prevention of humanitarian crises. In that respect, early warning mechanisms have an essential role to play in preventing conflict, as they involve the monitoring of issues such as: respect for and promotion of minority identity; participation of minorities in political, economic and cultural life; and equal and effective access to justice and other effective remedies for violations of the human rights of minority groups. Participants will seek to draw from the experiences of minority groups whose efforts to create and maintain harmonious, diversified, inclusive and participative societies have contributed to preventing conflict. They will also consider the extent to which

promoting inclusive and resilient societies can ensure that minorities do not suffer disproportionately from the impact of humanitarian crises other than conflicts, in other words crises such as disasters or pandemics.

Participants will be invited to consider and propose ways to ensure that international, regional, national and local humanitarian actors systematically take into account the needs of minorities and other vulnerable groups in their planning, risk assessments and contingency plans. Participants will discuss ways to overcome common challenges in the equal distribution of humanitarian aid, including physical and security obstacles to remote areas and the lack of adequate funding or other resources for acquiring the logistical means to access communities in such areas.

Participants will seek to identify effective strategies that will enable Governments and humanitarian actors to establish trusted channels of communication with communities at risk, including minority communities, before crises occur. They will discuss how the establishment of efficient and trusted communication lines before crises arise can be essential in at least two respects: in terms of collecting accurate information and data about minority groups to develop plans, including contingency plans; and in terms of ensuring the meaningful participation of minorities in the development of such plans. Participants will also consider how best to ensure that trusted communication lines remain operational when crises arise.

4. Protecting minority rights during humanitarian crises

Participants will seek to identify the needs of minorities, including the specific needs of minority women and children, in humanitarian crises and to assess the risk they run of suffering disproportionately from the impact of such crises. Participants will highlight various factors that perpetuate the disproportionate impact of crises on minorities and discuss the need to develop more targeted strategies and to increase aid and security investments to better meet the specific needs of and respond to the impacts on minorities. They will discuss ways to ensure that minorities are not discriminated against in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, in spite of the many challenges, including by assessing the number and location of certain minorities directly or indirectly affected by a humanitarian crisis and by identifying who might be trapped between conflict lines, who might be located in camps for internally displaced persons, informal settlements or host families, who might be dispersed and who will only be able to benefit fully from international protection if they are able to access the territory of another State.

Participants will recall the importance for minority communities to be well informed of their rights before, during and after a crisis, to enable them to hold State and humanitarian organizations to account. They will review the importance of guaranteeing the physical safety and freedom of movement of minorities affected by crisis, as well as of fulfilling their economic, social and cultural rights and their civil and political rights.

Participants will address the importance of protecting civilians during conflict and the need to implement effectively international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order, inter alia, to ensure a minimal impact on civilian populations, reduce forced displacement, stop attacks on civilians and ensure and respect humanitarian corridors to places in conflict zones.

Participants will address how a minority rights approach can guide disaster response efforts, thereby ensuring that minority voices and concerns are taken into account in relief and recovery programmes.

Participants will explore how empowering local humanitarian actors could contribute to a better representation of minorities' interests during humanitarian operations. Acknowledging the diversity and complementarity of well-coordinated international,

national and local humanitarian actors and increasing partnership with local actors, who often have a better understanding of local social, cultural and political dynamics and better access to remote areas, could not only help to improve the general efficiency and legitimacy of international humanitarian operations but also foster greater participation by minority groups in operations affecting them.

Participants will discuss the link between crises and the threat to minority identity, and seek ways to ensure that minorities can maintain their cultural, linguistic and religious identities even during protracted crises.

5. Recovering from a crisis: ensuring durable solutions

Participants will examine the challenges faced by minorities seeking to return to a situation of normality after a crisis has ended, for example when returning to their place of origin, when finding a new settlement after displacement, when seeking to relaunch local economies and social services after protracted isolation, when reclaiming properties and goods after a crisis or when reskilling and seeking a new occupation in a new environment. Participants will reflect on how to prevent minorities from being socially and economically left behind at the recovery stage of crises.

Participants will address the need to ensure that all members of minority groups, including those who suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as women, children, older persons, youth, people with disabilities or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, are actively engaged in consultations to determine their best possible options for return or recovery from crisis. Consideration will be given to how minorities can best lead and participate in the decisions affecting them, for example in decisions on a place of relocation or in identifying priority areas for post-crisis assistance. Participants will also discuss the importance of mediation and complaints mechanisms and procedures for minorities to share their experience and voice their concerns about the management of national and international relief operations.

Participants will reflect on a number of aspects, including: the responsibility of all States with regard to reducing the phenomenon of statelessness, which often disproportionately affects minorities in humanitarian crises; the responsibility of host States with regard to the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with a distinct minority identity within their society while enabling them to preserve their religious, linguistic and cultural heritage; and the obligation of States with respect to the protection of asylum seekers, including guaranteeing the principle of non-refoulement and finding durable solutions.

6. Concluding remarks

Participants will draw on the outcomes of the two-day discussions to reflect on the specific needs of minorities in humanitarian crises and the disproportionate impact that such crises have on minority communities. They will be encouraged to comment on, contribute to and finalize a set of draft recommendations on minorities in humanitarian crises and be invited to identify additional recommendations for States and intergovernmental and non-governmental humanitarian actors to ensure non-discrimination, respect and promotion of minority rights at all stages of humanitarian crises.

The Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues will make concluding remarks, including proposals for follow-up steps to be taken with Forum participants.

Annex

Programme of work

<i>Date/time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Programme</i>
Thursday, 24 November 2016		
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"> • Welcome and opening remarks by the President of the Human Rights Council • Remarks by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights • Remarks by the Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues • Remarks by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues
3-6 p.m.	2. Legal framework and key concepts 3. Respecting minority rights as a means of preventing or mitigating the impact of humanitarian crises	
Friday, 25 November 2016		
10 a.m.-1 p.m.	4. Protecting minority rights during humanitarian crises	
3-6 p.m.	5. Recovering from a crisis: ensuring durable solutions 6. Concluding remarks	