



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Forum on Minority Issues

#### Twelfth session

28 and 29 November 2019

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. Human rights and minority language education.
3. Public policy objectives for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages.
4. Effective practices for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages.
5. Language, education and the empowerment of minority women and girls.
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 twelfth session of the Forum on Minority Issues will be held on 28 and 29 November 2019 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.

##### *Opening meeting*

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 on Minority Issues and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

##### *Documentation*

The documents for the session will be made available on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ([www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session12.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session12.aspx)).



### *Discussions*

During the two-day session, participants will be invited to contribute to four panel discussions under the general topic “Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities”. Each panel discussion will be introduced briefly by a number of experts and facilitated by a moderator, who will guide the discussion towards the formulation of specific recommendations. Recommendations emanating from three regional forums (Africa and the Middle East; Asia and the Pacific; and Europe) held in 2019 under the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues will also be considered, in order to include greater regional input and views on the issues to be discussed at the twelfth session of the Forum.

Participants will be encouraged to make statements or comments, to answer questions from the moderator and to suggest recommendations to be included in the outcome document that the Special Rapporteur will present to the Human Rights Council at its forty-third session, in March 2020.

## **2. Human rights and minority language education**

Education in, and the teaching of, minority languages is an essential issue for many minorities around the world. Although a number of international and regional human rights instruments address the issue, gaps remain in identifying the relationship between human rights obligations and the use of minority languages in education. Participants will discuss the rights enshrined in international and regional human rights instruments providing for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages.

The loss of linguistic diversity is a loss for humanity’s heritage. Respectfully accommodating linguistic diversity is a hallmark of an inclusive society, and one of the keys to countering intolerance and racism. Inclusive education is also intimately connected to human rights obligations in that it involves equal learning opportunities for all, including speakers of minority languages, without any discrimination. The participants will explore the benefits of education in minority languages and the benefits of acquiring fluency in official and other languages. They will draw comparisons and discuss these issues through a human rights-based approach, including in the context of ensuring the right to education for all. This is particularly important for the education of minority children, who often face significant challenges in accessing quality education and who often drop out of school because education is not provided in their own language.

Discussions will highlight the positive, empowering effect of education in, and the teaching of, minority languages, in particular with regard to the effective participation in public life by persons belonging to minorities. Participants will address the specific needs and preferences of minorities with regard to pedagogical approaches, and methods for teaching in, and the teaching of, minority languages.

## **3. Public policy objectives for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages**

Participants will consider how public policies should facilitate the effective implementation of the human rights of persons belonging to minorities in the use of their languages in education. They will discuss the need for promoting such education with the purpose of preserving and promoting minority languages and identities. Participants will also consider ways to effectively implement Sustainable Development Goal 4, aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. They will consider minority language education and its relationship to social development and cohesion, and the strengthening of inclusive and tolerant societies.

Discussions will highlight the importance of recognizing and promoting the educational needs of minorities as a crucial component for the promotion of society’s diversity, and thus as an important factor in reducing inter-ethnic tensions and preventing conflicts.

In addition to legislative, institutional and policy measures, it is essential that appropriate resources and effective approaches are put in place for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages. Participants will discuss the efficient and non-discriminatory use and management of resources, including by members of minority communities themselves, as

an important component for advancement of the above-mentioned rights of persons belonging to minorities. They will discuss the importance of international and regional cooperation and assistance for the advancement of this goal.

#### **4. Effective practices for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages**

Beyond purely human rights or public policy considerations, it is essential to keep in mind the pedagogical value and significance of teaching in minority languages, and the impact it may have on learning outcomes for minority children, as well as on their interaction with other members of society. Participants will make reference to inclusive pedagogical approaches and teaching methods, including methods for teaching in, and for the teaching of, minority languages. Participants will also discuss the various types of educational institutions accommodating education in, and the teaching of, minority languages.

Participants will share experiences relating to the opportunities available to linguistic minorities to learn and receive education in their languages. They will discuss effective practices relating to the inclusion of minority languages in national curricula, such that individuals belonging to other linguistic communities have the opportunity to be exposed to minority languages. The effective involvement of minorities in the design and implementation of educational programmes, as well as practices relating to intercultural exchanges and activities carried out among different language groups inside and outside educational settings, will be discussed.

Participants will be invited to reflect on the relationship between education in, and the teaching of, a minority language and the learning of a majority, State or official language.

#### **5. Language, education and the empowerment of minority women and girls**

Participants will discuss the impact of minority language education on access to education and opportunities for minority women and girls, who often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion and language. Minority women and girls are disproportionately affected by barriers to access to education and high school dropout rates.

Barriers to education represent barriers to progress and empowerment. Education in, and the teaching of, their languages often assist in ensuring better access to education and learning opportunities for minority women and girls. Language is also an important tool for ensuring the realization of basic human rights and the accessibility of services, including health-care and social services, which in some cases can be particularly vital for women and girls. Participants will highlight these matters and discuss ways to more effectively address related challenges.

Participants will also discuss the importance of the inclusion and effective participation of minority women and girls in the design of policies and strategies relating to education in, and the teaching of, their languages, and will share good practices in this regard.

#### **6. Concluding remarks**

Participants will draw on the outcomes of the two days of discussion to reflect on the best ways of addressing the issue of the provision of education in, and the teaching of, minority languages as part of the equal promotion and protection of the human rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Participants will be encouraged to identify and refine a number of recommendations to States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors for the promotion and fulfilment of the rights of persons belonging to minorities in relation to education in, and the teaching of, their languages as they relate to each item of the present agenda.

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>
<b>Thursday, 28 November 2019</b>		
10 a.m.–1 p.m.	1. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work	<p>Opening of the Forum on Minority Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and opening remarks by the President of the Human Rights Council</li> <li>• Remarks by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</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. Human rights and minority language education	
3–6 p.m.	3. Public policy objectives for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages	
<b>Friday, 29 November 2019</b>		
10 a.m.–1 p.m.	4. Effective practices for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages	
3–6 p.m.	5. Language, education and the empowerment of minority women and girls	
	6. Concluding remarks	