

## **4<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Minority Issues**

**Geneva November 2011-12-05 Remarks by Anastasia Crickley**

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### Introduction

I first and foremost I welcome this 4<sup>th</sup> Minorities Forum and thank Austria for sponsorship of the resolution at the Human Rights Council which facilitates it. I value being able to participate. I see this as an opportunity to ensure that the outcomes and recommendations of the previous Forums fully reflect realising rights for women from minorities. It is also an opportunity to directly assert minority women's rights.

At the outset I would like to acknowledge and wish Rita Izsák very well in her role as UN Independent Expert on Minority issues. I am very glad, as someone who has worked for many years for Romani and Traveller rights, in particular the rights of Romani and Traveller women, to see a Romani woman taking this role. I would like also to pay a very particular tribute to Gay

McDougall and to the groundbreaking work she did during her term as the first Independent Expert not only establishing the role and making this Forum a reality, but also ensuring that minority rights were successfully profiled and progressed, in sometimes sensitive and difficult circumstances and times.

In my short intervention I will outline some relevant international and, also regional and national instruments, particularly at the European level, as well as making a few comments and drawing some conclusions and suggestions, a challenging job in the seven minutes available.

### International Instruments

The relevant international instruments which address or have the potential to address the multiple intersecting discriminations experienced by women from minorities have already been included in your materials, so I won't spend too much time on them. They include of course the Declaration on Minorities, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other Covenants including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Also important are the outcome documents of both the Durban and

Beijing conferences where women from minorities were explicitly mentioned and their rights underlined. However, the task of ensuring that women from minorities are fully integrated, and that the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they experience are adequately and consistently considered by both Treaty Bodies and by the all instruments of the United Nations, I have to say, in my view, is work in progress. It would be easy for me as a member of the CERD to sit here and give you chapter and verse of what we have done, and indeed CERD in concluding observations, virtually always focuses on the need to realise rights of minority women, but I think it is important for all of us involved in these processes to recognise that much still needs to be done. You also need to use this Forum to call on us to continue to make progress.

CERD Recommendation 25 on women recognises the need for disaggregated data, not just disaggregated data on the basis of minorities, but disaggregated data which also helps establish the position of minority women. This disaggregated data is essential. We cannot manage things, unless we know what we are talking about. It's not about labelling, it's about creating the conditions for addressing discrimination. I urge the Forum to call for this in your recommendations and also for full engagement of the new agency, UN Women with the realising of rights for women from minorities.

### Regional Instruments

At regional level in Europe the various Conventions of the Council of Europe and the European

Court for Human Rights have done significant work in the area of realising the rights of women from minorities. I am reminded of the groundbreaking precedents for the reproductive rights of minority women established through the court. The conclusions of the European Commission on Racism and intolerance and reports of the Advisory Committee for the Council of Europe Framework Convention on National Minorities and their respective reporting processes have been particularly useful also

The research undertaken by the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union, and published just recently under the EU MIDIS project, indicates that people from minority ethnic groups are five times more likely to experience multiple discrimination than people in the majority population, and that gender and age have very particular impacts on discrimination. This is information that we cannot ignore. The Lisbon Treaty of the European Union also pronounces very explicitly on protection of minorities, but it doesn't create the legal competence to make policies. However are a number of issues regarding migrant women, regarding the need for policies on integration that clearly include women from minorities, regarding the independent rights of women migrants or those seeking asylum, (these in effect and call for independent status of women in migration and asylum processes), continue to be lobbied for by European NGOs they are important considerations for to the rights of minority women. Finally in the European Union framework there are proposals

for legislation on multiple discrimination both at national and European levels, which if implemented could be very significant for the issues we are considering here today.

### Ireland

In an Irish context and forgive me mentioning my own country, I'm very conscious of the significant and ongoing importance of the organisations of minority women themselves. I'm specifically conscious of the ways in which the National Traveller Women's Forum and the AKIDWA African women's network have created significant waves with regard to not just the visibility of women from minorities, but also with regard to realising their rights and moving forward their agendas. However, I'm also very conscious in the Irish context of the impact of our well publicised recession on women in general and minority women in particular. Migrant women and women from minorities globally create opportunities for majority women to be able to participate in the workforce through their work for example as housekeepers, child minders and domestic labour. In a recession they are blamed for taking jobs no one else will do. Then when they lose their visas and status, not through their own fault but through actions or lack of them by others they face deportation.

## Comments

May I offer comments, as a majority women who is supportive of and wishes to work with women from minorities on their terms, because I believe that lasting progress will be only made for minority women by minority women. The realities of the gendered discrimination and practices of stereotyping can not relieve states, in my view, of their obligations, nor should it facilitate lethargy in rights bodies. The **obfuscation** of minority women's rights by manipulation of the care and control roles that are played by women from minorities, and indeed by all women, is something that we need to focus on again today.

Full and effective equality for minority women and the realisation of minority women's rights means mainstreaming their rights into all considerations, so that, when Treaty Bodies are considering rights, the rights of women need to be considered, and also the rights of women from minorities. There needs to be explicit mainstreaming of the rights of minority women when women's rights are considered by global and regional treaty bodies. Measuring is essential. Special measures and positive actions need to be taken. We need also to go beyond the idea of the equality of opportunity as the goal, to equality of participation, equality of outcome, and to the measuring of impact. These are the terms in which this Forums recommendations need to be framed.

Finally let me say, that I believe that this Forum has to acknowledge the hierarchy that exists between minority women, some rich, some poor; some privileged, some marginalised. If we don't

acknowledge differences, we ignore class which also means ignoring the poverty, and we are in danger of facilitating the development of a liberated elite on the back of further marginalisation of the poorest women from minorities. We need to link rights, recognition, and re-distribution and ensure that these go hand in hand, so that all women and in particular the most vulnerable and disadvantaged women from minorities can share progress and realise their rights.

By way of conclusion let me say, thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to the mainstreaming of the rights of minority women through recommendations from this Forum and in all work towards realisation of minorities and womens rights. I look forward especially to supporting your collective efforts to ensuring this.

Thank you very much.