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Ninth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

**Panel on
respecting minority rights as a means of preventing or mitigating
the impact of humanitarian crisis**

**Sara Sekkenes
Conflict Prevention Adviser
UNDP Office in Geneva**

**24 November 2016
15:00-18:00**

**Conference room XX
Palais des Nations**

Excellencies,

- President of the Human Rights Council (tbc),
- High Commissioner for Human Rights (tbc),
- Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues,
- Special Rapporteur,
- Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here and to speak on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the ninth Forum on Minority Issues. The focus this year on humanitarian crises and the legal and moral obligation to pay specific attention to the promotion and protection of human rights of minorities is, unfortunately, very timely.

At UNDP, with our development mandate and presence in some 170 countries and territories, translating human rights standards into reality for all people is central to our work - in humanitarian, fragile, post-conflict, and developing contexts.

Many of today's crises are becoming increasingly protracted, creating a holding pattern of prolonged vulnerability, leaving millions to suffering and continued instability, and in many cases even exacerbated discrimination.

As was widely discussed during the World Humanitarian Summit, these complex challenges can only be addressed by strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and, importantly, throughout them all, also human rights. Many actors operate in this shared space, under different frameworks, but they all share an interest in addressing vulnerabilities and discrimination.

The 2030 Agenda have the potential to transform both development cooperation and humanitarian action. It was adopted by all Member States, is universal and

reaffirms existing commitments to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also underlines the imperative of a human rights based approach in its implementation.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lays out to leave no one behind – and moreover, to reach those furthest behind first. This is a stark reminder of the need to address development imperatives also in crises settings, in particular as crises becomes protracted with those in need, both as displaced and in host communities, requiring support beyond what more traditionally is referred to as life-saving humanitarian aid, like public services, schooling, health, employment and a meaningful participation in community life. Over time, to be deprived of these can also become a threat to family as well as personal life.

Excellencies, this is a key entry point to further the promotion and protection of human rights of minorities.

UNDP is committed to working with the range of humanitarian and development actors to help deliver on these commitments. As highlighted during the WHS, a range of interventions are needed in crises settings in this regard that requires joint analysis and longer-term joined up planning; local solutions with local partners including civil society organizations and local authorities; flexible multi-year financing; and strengthened policy and legal frameworks to protect and foster inclusion of displaced people. Let me note however that UNDP has neither a normative nor monitoring mandate on human rights. Our efforts in advancing human rights are anchored in the principle of national ownership and is demand driven. Since 2009, UNDP has responded to such demand from around 100 countries to help bring human rights standards and principles more fully into their policies, laws and national development frameworks.

Excellencies,

UNDP on the ground are well aware that the shrinking of civic space, the curtailing of freedom of speech and exclusionary practices of political power-sharing, discrimination of women, minorities, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities or persecution of LGBTI persons – all have the potential to fuel grievances that break down social cohesion in communities and easily escalate conflict. In UNDP we believe that as development actors our role is to address the root causes of conflict and these are often connected to the enjoyment of basic and fundamental human rights. The focus on sustainable development, development that is resilient and endures, would imply that humanitarian actors must appreciate the need to connect protected populations to longer term development outcomes. Equally, in this new way of working, it also requires development actors to be more present in crises settings, among those furthest behind.

As has been recognized by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Ms. Rita Izsak-Ndiaye; alongside efforts to address discrimination and ensure the realization of minority rights - good and inclusive governance is a vital factor in preventing conflict, violence and atrocities against minorities, now firmly established also by SDG 16 on just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Through our constructive partnership with the previous Independent Expert on Minority Issues, OHCHR and Minority Rights Group International, UNDP has made efforts to equip our staff to offer more targeted, inclusive and contextualized support with the Resource Guide and Toolkit on Marginalized Minorities in Development Programming. It reviews programming opportunities and relevant strategies to integrate minorities in development, including capacity development

support for state actors, our staff and minorities, as well as entry points for advocacy and partnership building.

In Colombia, UNDP alongside OHCHR, engaged victims and civil society in the transitional justice process to address the legacy of violence within the country. I am particularly pleased to be able to listen to you Erlendy and hear your Afrocolombian perspective. Colombia's peace process is especially noteworthy in the unprecedented participation by victims of the conflict. Eight national and regional forums thoroughly engaged civil society by bringing together 10,000 people. Furthermore, the process included 60 conflict victims at the negotiating table, including victims of sexual violence, women, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants and LGBTI persons affected by warring parties. The country office engaged with the Ministry of Women and LGBTI persons to publish a report on "ignored voices". It brings the testimonies of 92 LGBTI victims and a diagnostic about violence suffered by the LGBTI conflict victims, including homicide, sexual violence, stereotyping and displacement.

In Kenya UNDP has explored the linkages between refugee women from South Sudan living with HIV in humanitarian settings and Gender Based Violence (GBV), and through evidence-based activities, sensitization and capacity building of duty bearers and service providers allowed communities to identify issues around registration and identification as risk factors that cause refugees and elsewhere in the region to be more vulnerable to GBV. In addition, these efforts have supported dialogues between refugees and host communities.

I would also like to mention the Compact for young people's participation in humanitarian crises, endorsed at the WHS this year, which draws on the Doha

Youth Declaration on Reshaping the Humanitarian Agenda and the UN SCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, among others.

The Compact recognizes the humanitarian responsibility to enable and protect the rights, address the specific needs and build on the strengths of all young people. Ensuring young people have the skills, capacity and resources to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from humanitarian situations, will improve effectiveness and strengthen community resilience.

As one of the development agencies with the largest presence in Syria, UNDP works with affected communities, in particular young people, to help them cope, rebuild, recover and protect development gains. Some examples of UNDP's work with young people include the provision of temporary jobs; supporting basic health services such as ambulatory service, reproductive health support, and assistance for young people with disabilities; and creating solid waste removal projects and other initiatives to prevent communicable diseases and illnesses linked to poor nutrition and living conditions.

Thank you for your attention.