

15th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues

Review. Rethink. Reform.

30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Minority Rights

Concept Note

The [15th session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues](#) (UN Forum) will be convened on 1 and 2 December 2022 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 6/15 of 28 September 2007 and resolution 19/23 of 23 March 2012. This year, the theme of the UN Forum is "Review. Rethink. Reform: 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Minority Rights".

1. Background

Promoting equality. Protecting communities. Providing a voice. Preventing conflict. The Declaration aimed to achieve all of that, and to provide countries concrete guidance on how to protect and promote minorities' human rights.

Michelle Bachelet, ex-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. [Statement](#) to mark the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration.

The year 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (hereinafter UNDM). Since its adoption in 1992, the Declaration remains the only global instrument for the protection of minority rights. It reinforces and builds on the rights enshrined in the UN human rights framework to protect and promote the existence, equality, identity and effective participation of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

The 30th anniversary also offers an important opportunity to examine the diverse ways in which the Declaration has been used and implemented in practice and to gain the perspectives of different stakeholders on how it

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has impacted on aspects of national legislation, institutional mechanisms and their activities to advance the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

By using this opportunity, the UN Forum will take stock not only on the milestones achieved but also missed opportunities, failures and existing gaps in the minority rights protection. Looking into the past and present through the UNDM's lenses, the UN Forum will also provide a platform to build a shared future-oriented vision over the the global recognition, protection and promotion of the rights of minorities for a secure life in a diverse and just world.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues Dr Fernand de Varennnes pointed out in the concept notes for his mandate's four regional forums (Americas, Africa- Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Europe-Central Asia) held in 2022 and organized by the Tom Lantos Institute, the UNDM needs to be better understood, acknowledged and implemented since "minorities continue to remain vulnerable to oppression and face denial of their human rights in every corner of the globe. More than three quarters of the world's stateless are persons who belong to minorities, and in many countries around the same proportion are the targets of hate speech and hate crimes. Most of the world's violence and conflict target minorities on the basis of their religious, linguistic, cultural, racial and ethnic identities."

[The 15th session of the Forum](#) will therefore be framed around the theme of "Review. Rethink. Reform" and will encourage a constructive dialogue over a number of questions, including "How has the Declaration been mainstreamed within the national and regional normative frameworks and the UN system?" and "How can the Declaration respond to the new challenges appeared since its adoption?".

The UN Forum will encourage open discussion about ways to eliminate persisting obstacles in implementing the Declaration and means to achieve wider and tangible progress. Recognizing the ultimate role of minority human rights defenders in bringing the principles of the Declaration into life, the Forum will place their experiences into the heart of the two-days discussions.

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At a time of particularly acute threats being faced by minorities, the Forum will consider concrete recommendations and provide practical suggestions on how to translate the provisions of the Declaration into action on the ground. The recommendations of the Forum will be presented by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues to the Human Rights Council at its fifty second session in March 2023.

The UN Forum joins [the 30th anniversary commemoration](#) of the Declaration organised under the auspices of OHCHR under the theme “All in 4 Minority Rights”.

2. General Objectives

The UN Forum on Minority Issues provides a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as thematic contributions and expertise to the work of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues.

3. Participants

The UN Forum shall be open to the participation of States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and mechanisms in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, academics and experts on minority issues, representatives of minorities, minority and non-governmental organizations.

4. Areas of Discussion

The discussions will address the following overarching themes that reflect the main challenges and issues in the field of implementing the UNDMI:

- Review: Normative frameworks and the mainstreaming of the Declaration at the UN

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- Rethink: Minority rights defenders and their role in promoting principles of the Declaration
- Reform: Filling the gaps in the implementation of the Declaration
- Open dialogue: urgent situations of minorities

A gender perspective will be applied to all areas of discussion to address particular vulnerability of minority women in the existing implementation gaps.

5. Inputs and outcome

The [UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues](#) encourages wide participation from States, national human rights institutions, civil society representatives, as well as regional and international organizations, minorities and other stakeholders, including internet companies and social media platforms. Recommendations emanating from the four regional forums (Americas, Africa-Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Europe-Central Asia) held in 2022 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 fifteenth session of the Forum. These can be consulted [at the webpage of the Regional Forums](#).

All participants are encouraged to contribute to the discussion and dialogue by sharing experiences and views about the main areas of discussion of the UN Forum. Based on the dialogue and contributions of the participants a summary of the discussion of the Forum will be prepared by the Chairperson of the UN Forum, and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues will prepare a report on the recommendations of the UN Forum.