



**High-level meeting of the 77th session of the General Assembly
to mark the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of
the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic,
Religious and Linguistic Minorities**

**Wednesday, 21 September 2022
Trusteeship Council Chamber, UN Headquarters, NY**

CONCEPT NOTE



The President of the General Assembly will convene a High-level meeting to mark the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities on Wednesday, 21 September, at 10 a.m., in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at the UN Headquarters in New York, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/168](#).

The meeting will be webcast live on UN WebTV in all six official languages of the United Nations.

Objective

Thirty years ago, on 18 December 1992, United Nations Member States came together and adopted by consensus the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities¹ The Declaration remains the key instrument at a universal level to address the political and civil, economic, social and cultural rights of persons belonging to minorities. In its resolution 76/168, the UN General Assembly recognized that while progress has been made, the situation of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities is critical in many parts of the world and many challenges remain to ensure the full enjoyment of their rights. The Assembly also acknowledged the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration as an occasion for States to reflect on implementation gaps and to take measures for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

The Declaration is based on the premise found in its preamble, that “[t]he promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live”. After all, minority rights’ protection under international law started with the aim of preventing conflicts and protecting communities of individuals lacking in power.

Minorities globally are facing unprecedented barriers and challenges in the promotion and protection of their rights. The principles of equality, participation and non-discrimination are currently under threat in many jurisdictions. In many countries, minorities are targeted disproportionately by hate speech and incitement to violence on social media platforms. They are being stripped of citizenship rights and unable to exercise basic political rights, due in part to deep structural barriers as well as entrenched discriminatory practices. Many minorities face obstacles in their effective political representation and participation and may not benefit equally from economic development.

¹ See General Assembly resolution [47/135](#) of 18 December 1992 at <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/47/135>

Minorities are also more likely to face barriers in access to quality education, including education in their own language. Further, they have been affected disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental hazards and are far more likely to live in areas with heavy pollution.² These manifestations of discrimination reflect some degree of regression and threaten the significant gains made over the past decades. Thirty years since its adoption, the need for effective measures to protect the rights of minorities under the Declaration has become much more urgent than ever in light of the rise in inequalities.

In his biennial reports to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has continually stressed respect for minority rights obligations and the important role minority protection plays in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including the central commitment to leave no one behind and to target those left the furthest behind.³ Minorities are however increasingly being left behind, with their human rights most likely to be ignored or unprotected and their marginalization and exclusion increasing. In Our Common Agenda report, the Secretary General reiterated the importance of minorities to be heard and to participate in decisions that affect them.⁴

The high-level meeting offers an important opportunity to take stock and evaluate the implementation of the Declaration, identify constraints and achievements, showcase examples of good practices and set priorities for the future, consistent with minorities' effective participation and based on their own realities and needs. As the world moves toward a post-COVID-19 future and a new social contract, diversity must be inclusive and just in order to build a resilient global community of individuals equal in rights and opportunities regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, language and other features.

The President's summary of the discussions at the High-level meeting will further assist the international community to chart the way forward and recommit its engagement to actively and fully implement protection of the rights of minorities as expressed in the Declaration 30 years ago.

Format

The high-level meeting will take place in-person on Wednesday, 21 September 2022, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The high-level meeting will consist of an opening meeting, a general debate, and a closing meeting. A more detailed programme will be circulated in due course.

Participation

In order to promote a constructive and inclusive dialogue, participation in the high-level meeting will be open for Member States, observers, the United Nations system, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC, that are actively engaged in minorities issues.

List of Speakers

The list of speakers for the general debate will be established in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly. It will be open on the e-speakers module of the e-deleGATE portal on 27 July 2022 at 10 a.m until 6 September 5 p.m. The provisional list of speakers will be circulated on 7 September 2022. The time limit for statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of States.

A limited number of slots will be reserved at the end of the debate to allow pre-selected speakers from non-governmental organizations in consultative status with Economic and Social Council to take the floor, time permitting.

² Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, [A/HRC/46/57](#). See, for example, WHO Social determinants of health, Report by the Director-General EB148/24, 6 January 2021, https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB148/B148_24-en.pdf and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7234789/>.

³ See for example [A/74/215](#) and [A/76/255](#) at <https://undocs.org/A/74/215> and <https://undocs.org/A/76/255>

⁴ https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf para 21

Outcome

The High-Level Meeting will result in a summary of the discussions prepared by the President of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 76/168.

Guiding questions

In their statements, delegations are invited to share their experiences and reflect on best practices and persisting challenges by addressing the following:

- Measures that Member States should take to ensure inclusive diversity in the recovery phase as the world moves toward a post-COVID-19 future and a new social contract. Stability, security and sustainability require moving towards a more inclusive agenda for minorities with more targeted efforts to reduce poverty, address inequality, achieve balanced prosperity, and promote social cohesion and conflict prevention.
- Measures that Member States should take to combat the growing exclusion, marginalization and discrimination experienced by minorities and which has contributed to an increasingly insecure world with increased displacement due to persecution, conflict, and violence.
- Measures that Member States should take to ensure minorities' effective participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.
- Measures that Member States should take to combat multiple, aggravated and intersecting forms of discrimination against minorities including their exclusion from economic and social gains.
- Measures to promote the empowerment of minority women and girls exposed to all forms of discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence; and those with specific needs such as older persons and persons with disabilities.
- Measures that Member States should take in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities within their territory, and to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.
- Examples of how to strengthen cooperation, including with international and regional organizations, and with the private sector, counting technology companies, national human rights institutions and civil society in protecting the rights of minorities.
- Share expertise, knowledge and effective practices in addressing and countering hate speech against minorities, while respecting and promoting human rights, including in the development and use of digital technologies.
- Measures that Member States should take to prevent minority group grievances resulting from human rights breaches from being instrumentalised politically as an excuse for the use of violence, and to prevent further increase in conflicts globally.
- Take stock, collect and analyse comprehensive disaggregated data in order to identify constraints and tailor legislation, policies and programmes to protect better minority rights by filling-in implementation gaps and taking measures for the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities to prevent them from being pushed further and further behind.

