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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Report of the independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall

Summary

The present report provides a summary of activities undertaken by the independent expert on minority issues. Since her previous report, the independent expert has undertaken two official country missions, to Colombia and to Viet Nam, to consult on minority issues.

The independent expert has continued her work to promote implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. She has conducted extensive consultations with regard to all elements of her mandate. She has attended expert seminars and conferences, convened consultations, engaged with States, specialized agencies, bodies and mechanisms of the United Nations system and regional intergovernmental organizations. She has consulted widely with civil society and directly with minority communities. She has guided and prepared the annual sessions of the Forum on Minority Issues, which in 2010 considered “Minorities and effective participation in economic life”. The independent expert reported to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

In the present report, the independent expert focuses on the role of the protection of minority rights in conflict prevention. She emphasizes that, among the essential elements of a strategy to prevent conflicts involving minorities are respect for minority rights, particularly with regard to equality in access to economic and social opportunities; effective participation of minorities in decision-making; dialogue between minorities and majorities within societies; and the constructive development of practices and institutional arrangements to accommodate diversity within society. Attention to minority rights at an early stage — before grievances lead to tensions and violence — would make an invaluable contribution to the culture of prevention within the United Nations, save countless lives and promote stability and development. Among a series of recommendations is that expertise in minority rights should be strengthened and integrated comprehensively across the United Nations system.

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Part One

Report on the activities of the independent expert

I. Introduction

1. The independent expert is pleased to submit to the Human Rights Council her annual report pursuant to Council resolution 7/6 of 27 March 2008, her sixth such report since taking up the mandate. In the report, the independent expert provides an overview of her activities undertaken since her previous report. In addition she includes a thematic discussion on the role of minority rights protection in promoting stability and conflict prevention.

2. The independent expert has continued her work to promote the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992 Declaration on Minorities). She has conducted extensive consultations with regard to all elements of her mandate, attended expert seminars and conferences, convened consultations, engaged with States, specialized agencies, bodies and mechanisms of the United Nations system and regional intergovernmental organizations. She has consulted widely with civil society and directly with minority communities. The independent expert applies a gender perspective in all aspects of her work.

II. Activities of the independent expert

A. Country visits

3. The independent expert visited Colombia from 1 to 12 February 2010. The focus of her visit was the situation of minority communities identified as Afro-Colombian, Black, Raizal and Palenquero. The visit provided a unique opportunity to consult on the country's extensive legislation, policy and practice relating to persons belonging to these communities and with regard to the country's implementation of the 1992 Declaration on Minorities. Issues addressed during the visit included displacement and dispossession of lands, poverty and violence against communities, in both rural and urban environments. The mission report is available as document A/HRC/16/45/Add.1.

4. The independent expert visited Viet Nam from 5 to 15 July 2010. She travelled to remote villages as well as to the urban centres of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The Government of Viet Nam has implemented initiatives to address the disproportionate poverty experienced by ethnic minority communities, which became the central focus of the visit of the independent expert. She also considered the rights of religious minorities and the extent to which minority children are afforded adequate opportunities to be taught in their own ethnic languages in the earliest years of education. The mission report is available as document A/HRC/16/45/Add.2.

5. The independent expert thanks the Governments of Colombia and Viet Nam for their cooperation during the preparation and conduct of her visits and looks forward to continuing constructive dialogue with regard to her analysis and recommendations. The independent expert looks forward to a positive reply from the following States which she has requested to visit: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand and Turkey.

B. Forum on Minority Issues

6. The Forum on Minority Issues, established under resolution 6/15 of the Human Rights Council, is mandated to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and to provide thematic contributions and expertise to the work of the independent expert. The independent expert is required to guide the work of the Forum, prepare its annual meetings and make recommendations to the Human Rights Council for thematic subjects to be considered by the Forum, and to report the recommendations of the Forum to the Council. In December 2008, the inaugural Forum on Minority Issues considered minorities and the right to education (A/HRC/10/11/Add.1). In November 2009 the second annual session of the Forum considered minorities and effective political participation (A/HRC/13/25). The Forum has been successful in identifying and analysing best practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives for the further implementation of the 1992 Declaration on Minorities and has produced tangible outcomes in the form of thematic recommendations of practical value to all stakeholders.

7. The third annual session of the Forum was held on 14 and 15 December 2010 and considered the issue of minorities and effective participation in economic life. The 1992 Declaration on Minorities states that persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life (art. 2, para. 2). In addition, it states that ensuring that persons belonging to minorities are “an integral part of the development of society as a whole” is necessary to maintain or build harmonious and respectful relations among a society’s various components (preamble, sixth paragraph). Furthermore, the Declaration highlights that States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country (art. 4, para. 5).

8. Economic exclusion is a cause, a manifestation and a consequence of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities. Many minorities have historically been excluded from full and effective participation in economic life, both in the developed and in the developing world. Minorities are often discriminated against when they seek employment, for example, on the basis of their colour, religion, language, names or even addresses. Minorities are often poorly represented even in public sector employment, despite legislation that bans discrimination in both public and private sectors. They may face barriers in accessing credit or loans to begin small businesses and may live in the poorest or remote regions, which offer limited prospects for their economic development. Equally, large-scale economic development projects or commercial activities carried out on the lands and territories where minorities live, without prior consultation of these minorities, have had negative impacts, including displacement, the perpetuation of poverty and, in some cases, violence.

9. Several factors and challenges can exacerbate this exclusion of minorities, including deteriorating economic conditions, ethnic tensions and rising discrimination. In some countries, unequal regional distribution of resources and services and a lack of basic infrastructure in regions where minorities live often have the effect of preventing minorities from fully exercising their economic and social rights. The numerical disadvantage of minority status can also translate into a lack of political power and exclusion from effective participation in decision-making processes to protect rights or access to mechanisms of justice when rights are violated. The past decade has also brought into the picture new and unanticipated challenges, including the global food and economic crises that have been proven to have a greater impact on particular vulnerable groups and minorities.

10. Consequently, the rights of minorities to participate effectively in economic life must be fully taken into account by Governments seeking to promote equality at every

level. From implementing non-discrimination in employment and enforcing corporate responsibility principles to developing national economic development and international development assistance schemes, Governments face the constant challenge of ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected and that they benefit as equal stakeholders in society. In this regard, in their response to the current global crisis, development agencies, financial institutions and other actors involved in international cooperation are also faced with the challenge of ensuring that measures taken and cooperation envisaged in order to alleviate the effects of the crisis do not negatively impact minority rights. The recommendations of the third Forum on Minority Issues will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its sixteenth session (A/HRC/16/46).

11. During the reporting period, the independent expert undertook follow-up activities to promote implementation of the recommendations emanating from sessions of the Forum. Between 31 October and 3 November, she participated in an international parliamentary conference on the theme “Parliaments, minorities and indigenous peoples: effective participation in politics”, in Chiapas, Mexico, organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Mexican Congress of the Union and the Government of Chiapas, in collaboration with her mandate, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), among other partners. The Conference brought together parliamentarians from around the world to exchange lessons learned and good practices and to set out an agenda for action to enhance the effective participation of minorities and indigenous peoples in politics. The recommendations of the second session of the Forum on Minority Issues on minorities and effective political participation featured as a key resource and subject for the conference discussions.

12. This important global event sought to raise awareness of and build upon the recommendations of the Forum and other resources with a view to encouraging practical action and implementation at the national level. Discussions considered issues including: factors that determine the extent to which minorities and indigenous peoples are involved in the development of laws and measures affecting them; measures to overcome the double discrimination faced by minority and indigenous women; mechanisms for ensuring accountability of minority and indigenous representatives; the role of political parties in representing the specific interests of minorities or indigenous peoples; the advantages and limitations of parliamentary committees; and what lessons can be drawn from the participation of minorities and indigenous peoples in decision-making bodies at the regional, provincial and local levels.

13. On 18 and 19 December 2010, the independent expert participated in a civil society seminar in New Delhi, entitled: “Minority Issues and Social Exclusion in South, South East and East Asia: Challenges and State & Civil Society Responses, Positive Practices, Learning’s & Future Tasks”. The seminar benefitted from the participation of representatives of human rights organizations from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Its objectives included: to share information, take stock of key issues, share advocacy initiatives, identify positive practices; to share information on United Nations bodies and mechanisms and to identify entry points and opportunities for engagement with the United Nations system. It offered an important regional opportunity for the independent expert to promote awareness and implementation of the 1992 Declaration on Minorities and the recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues.¹

¹ For a review of the proceedings and outcomes of this event, see document A/HRC/16/45/Add.3.

C. Collaboration with the United Nations specialized agencies

14. Further to her ongoing collaboration with UNDP to further enhance the Programme's policy and programming interventions on minority issues, the independent expert is pleased to announce that the publication *Marginalised Minorities in Development Programming: A UNDP Resource Guide and Toolkit*², was launched and distributed to UNDP offices and staff globally on 26 May 2010. This publication is a tangible outcome of a comprehensive consultative and drafting process, led by a task force composed of lead policy advisers from all UNDP practice areas, regional bureaus, Regional Service Centres, country office practitioners, the independent expert, OHCHR staff, and Minority Rights Group International. The process also benefited tremendously from the inputs provided by representatives of civil society organizations working on minority issues in over 35 countries to an internal discussion paper.

15. The *Resource Guide and Toolkit* provides an overview of the international and regional legal standards and mechanisms relevant for minority rights and will enable UNDP staff in all regions to understand the key conceptual issues and fundamental principles for the promotion and protection of minority rights. It reviews programming opportunities and relevant strategies for UNDP to integrate minorities in development, including capacity development support for government officials and institutions, UNDP staff and minorities, as well as possible entry points for effective advocacy and partnership building efforts. Detailed attention is given to opportunities and strategies in UNDP practice areas. It provides specific tools to assist UNDP staff in building or strengthening their work on minorities in development in such key areas as: situation analysis; data collection; and monitoring and evaluation. Annexes provide a vast number of reference materials, including selected conclusions and recommendations on minority rights from United Nations treaty bodies, and studies and reports of the independent expert.

16. This invaluable source material has the potential to increase the opportunities available to minorities for meaningful participation and representation in development processes and for strengthening partnerships to protect and promote the rights of minorities. The independent expert looks forward to it being operationalized in different regional and country contexts, for which roll-out strategies are currently being drafted. As an initial regional activity to launch and promote the *Resource Guide and Toolkit*, the independent expert contributed to a Community of Practice Meeting of National Human Rights Institutions from the Caucasus and Central Asia held from 30 September to 1 October 2010, in Yerevan, Armenia. This conference addressed "Promoting Minority Rights and Gender Equality Agenda – Role of Independent and Effective National Human Rights Institutions" during which the *Resource Guide and Toolkit* was presented to participants.

17. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been engaged in minority rights interventions as part of its overall child-focused programming strategy which pays particular attention to vulnerable and excluded groups. The most visible and common forms have been in the field of education, where interculturalism and bilingual education have been the focus, and in that of health where special efforts are being made to target children with services in hard to reach areas. The agency organized a consultation on indigenous peoples' and minorities' issues in April 2009, in which the independent expert participated, as a major step towards providing a broad and interactive orientation into issues affecting minorities and minority children in particular. Senior UNICEF managers, practitioners, and external experts had the objective of identifying a policy framework and ways of

² Available from <http://hrbportal.org/wp-content/files/1282077542marginalisedminoritiesindevelopment.pdf>.

strengthening programme guidance on minority issues, improving knowledge sharing, and promoting cooperation with international mechanisms and other partners.

18. A comprehensive stock-take of UNICEF activities, undertaken in 2009, revealed the organization's active involvement in initiatives bringing real benefits to ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority communities. It recognized, however, the absence of an overall policy for guidance to country offices on minorities programme formulation and recommended the design of such a framework for the consolidation and improvement of future work on minorities. UNICEF intends to make the development of this strategy a primary focus in 2011. On 15 December 2010, UNICEF and Minority Rights Group International jointly hosted a side event during the third session of the Forum on Minority Issues. Chaired by the independent expert, the event provided an opportunity to share the involvement of UNICEF in minority issues globally, and present county-specific case studies.

D. Activities to promote minority issues in the context of the Millennium Development Goals

19. The independent expert has continued her work to increase attention to minority issues in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. Studies, including a report by the independent expert in 2007 (A/HRC/4/9), have demonstrated that minorities are frequently failing to benefit from national strategies to achieve the Goals, which do not take into account the unique situations of and the impact of discrimination on minorities. In adopting the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Heads of State and Government have recognized their "collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level" (para. 2) and resolved to strengthen their capacity "to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights" (para. 25).

20. On 22 and 23 March 2010, the independent expert participated with numerous leading scholars and practitioners as a keynote speaker in the International Symposium on Millennium Development Goals and Human Rights at Harvard Law School. The independent expert participated in the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals held from 20 to 22 September 2010 in New York. In addition, the independent expert participated in an informal event on the Goals held on 22 October, organized by OHCHR to coincide with the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

21. On 17 September 2010, the independent expert joined 25 other special procedures mandate holders in issuing a public statement prior to the High-level Plenary Meeting, urging Heads of State to give much greater attention to human rights issues in their efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Member States were called upon to implement the outcome document³ and recommendations with a stronger focus on human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, to ensure the achievement of the Goals, and to also make them meaningful for the billions of people who need them most.

22. In the context of the third session of the Forum on Minority Issues, held in December 2010, the independent expert highlighted that the realization of the right of minorities to effective participation in economic life is central to the achievement of the Goals and ensured that attention to this issue was a core component of the Forum

³ See General Assembly resolution 65/1.

discussions and subsequent recommendations. In developing programmes aimed at achieving the Goals, all stakeholders must face the additional challenge of ensuring that those programmes take minority issues into account and are developed and implemented in close collaboration with members of minority groups.

23. In all of her activities to promote attention to minority issues in the context of the Goals, the independent expert has reiterated the recommendations of her 2007 annual report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/4/9). Key recommendations include: that targeted as well as mainstreamed approaches and policies are required to address the particular circumstances of poverty experienced by persons belonging to minorities; Governments, in designing, planning and implementing poverty alleviation and Millennium Development Goal policies, must give high priority to ensuring that disadvantaged minorities are considered in relation to their unique conditions of exclusion and discrimination, and consequent high levels of extreme and persistent poverty; and that in Millennium Development Goal country reports, Governments provide detailed consideration of the situations of minority groups and disaggregated statistical data that help to reveal the status of minorities in relation to other groups.

Part Two

Thematic study: the role of minority rights protection in promoting stability and conflict prevention

I. Introduction

24. The thematic focus of the present report is the role of minority rights protection in promoting stability and conflict prevention. The independent expert considers that among the essential elements of a strategy to prevent conflicts involving minorities are: respect for minority rights; dialogue between minorities and majorities within societies; and the constructive development of practices and institutional arrangements to accommodate diversity within society.⁴ Attention to minority rights violations at an early stage - before they lead to tensions and violence - would make an invaluable contribution to the culture of prevention within the United Nations, save countless lives and promote stability and development.

25. The history of the development of minority rights at the United Nations has been closely linked to the need to address tensions between minorities and the State, and between population groups. The 1992 Declaration on Minorities states in its preamble that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to such minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live. The drafting of the Declaration began in 1978, and received added impetus with the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The importance attached to the Declaration was summed up by the representative of Austria, who, speaking before the Third Committee, observed that it should not be filed and forgotten, but implemented and filled with life, so as to contribute to overcoming situations of tension relating to minorities (see A/C.3/47/SR.47, para. 89).

26. It is the view of the independent expert that much bloodshed and suffering and many setbacks in the process of national development could be avoided if Governments took a proactive approach to minority rights, putting protections in place long before tensions

⁴ The thematic discussion presented here is an abridged version of the original, presented at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Third Committee, in the report of the independent expert on minority issues (A/65/287).

erupted. Societies in which mechanisms are in place allowing minorities freely to use their language, practice their culture and religion, and participate in political and economic life on an equal footing with the rest of the population are less likely to be societies in which tensions deteriorate into violent conflict.

27. Equally, in those States that implement protection for minority rights, minorities are more likely to be recognized as equal rights-holders and afforded the full protection of the State from aggression and violence directed against them.

28. Minorities are often the targets, rather than the perpetrators, of violence. When minority rights are violated, members of minorities may be at a greater risk of being subjected to systematic violence, even when they are bystanders to a conflict involving other parties. Such incidents can happen as a result of minorities' poverty and exclusion from political decision-making processes, or because their often remote communities, poorly served by State infrastructure, can become targets for occupation for strategic purposes or for exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, owing to the suspicion and prejudice with which they are often viewed by both members of the majority and security forces, minorities may be targeted with impunity.

29. Additionally, women and men members of minorities may be targeted by armed actors in different ways, increasing the forms of violence in the society in general. For example, women are targeted by sexual violence, while men are forcibly recruited into militias. The rape of women, for example, may be intended to humiliate men and demonstrate their inability to protect "their" women.

30. The views of the independent expert have been developed through visits to countries in almost every region of the world, thematic reports and policy debates that she has facilitated at the Forum on Minority Issues. She has consulted widely with Governments, experts and non-governmental organizations. She has participated in seminars and forums in the field of early warning and conflict prevention. In addition, she has held consultations with numerous key actors, including the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, including discussions relating to, inter alia, how efforts could be coordinated to identify potential threats to the existence of minorities and how to better coordinate conflict prevention work.

A. The link between minority rights violations and violent conflict

31. The protection of minority rights and the prevention of violent conflicts are legitimate goals of independent value to be pursued by the international community. Both goals lie at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations, and States should pursue each one as a valid objective in its own right. However, the fact that these two concerns are so often linked to one another makes it appropriate to consider them together.

32. Since the adoption of the 1992 Declaration on Minorities, the basic assumption contained in its preamble — that the implementation of minority rights contributes to the stability of States — has been taken up and developed further in successive resolutions of the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights, its successor the Human Rights Council, reports of the Secretary-General and outcome documents of a number of conferences and policy processes.

33. In his landmark report to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations in 2000, the Secretary-General stated that in many countries at war, the condition of poverty was coupled with sharp ethnic or religious cleavages, and that almost invariably, the rights of subordinate groups were insufficiently respected, the institutions of Government were insufficiently inclusive and the allocation of society's resources favoured the dominant faction over others. He added that the solution was clear: to promote human rights, to

protect minority rights and to institute political arrangements in which all groups were represented, and that every group needed to become convinced that the State belonged to all people (A/54/2000, paras. 202-203).

34. In the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I), the outcome document of the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the participating States expressed their concern that socio-economic development was being hampered by widespread internal conflicts which were due, among other causes, to gross violations of human rights, including those arising from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and from lack of democratic, inclusive and participatory governance. It urged States to recognize that techniques, mechanisms, policies and programmes for reconciling conflicts based on factors related to race, colour, descent, language, religion, or national or ethnic origin and for developing harmonious multiracial and multicultural societies needed to be systematically considered and developed (*ibid.*, paras. 21 and 171).

35. The Secretary-General has stated that respecting the rights of children, of women, and of all minorities is at the core of the Charter of the United Nations; it is both a moral obligation and an economic imperative. Discrimination and injustice threaten the goals for peace, security and sustainable development. Preserving minority languages and nurturing ethnic cultures and traditions lays the foundations for lasting stability.⁵

36. With respect to the donor community, it has been recognized that engagements between donors and recipient countries – whether from a conflict prevention or post-conflict peace-building perspective – need to be guided by recognition of the specific injustices suffered by minorities. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which brings together the world’s main donor Governments, has developed a set of principles guiding assistance to fragile States, in which it urges member States to promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.⁶

37. In 1994, States members of the Organization of African Unity reaffirmed their deep conviction that friendly relations among their peoples as well as peace, justice, stability and democracy, called for the protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all their people including national minorities and the creation of conditions conducive to the promotion of that identity. In the Americas, the Inter-American Democratic Charter stresses that the elimination of discrimination and respect for cultural diversity contribute to strengthening democracy and citizen participation, which in turn are necessary for ensuring peace, stability and development. In the Copenhagen Document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the participating States reaffirmed that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as part of universally recognized human rights was an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the participating States.

38. The Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity at Oxford University has undertaken detailed quantitative and qualitative research into conflict and horizontal inequalities (inequalities between ethnic, religious or linguistic communities) in 8 countries in three regions, and statistical desk research in 55 countries. The Centre concluded that in the top 5 per cent of countries with the greatest socio-economic inequalities, the risk of conflict is tripled when compared with the average. The risk of conflict increases again if socio-economic inequalities are combined with inequality in

⁵ See press release SG/SM/12833, 7 April 2010.

⁶ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Principles for good international engagement in fragile States” (Paris, 2007), available from www.oecd.org/document/48/0,3343,en_2649_33693550_35233262_1_1_1_1,00.html.

access to political decision-making, and inequality in cultural status adds a further risk factor.⁷

39. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict concluded that time and again in the twentieth century, attempts at suppression of ethnic, cultural or religious differences had led to bloodshed, and in case after case, the accommodation of diversity within appropriate constitutional forms had helped to prevent bloodshed.⁸ The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has conducted research showing that the likelihood of conflict increases with rising group inequality.⁹ The Minorities at Risk Project at the University of Maryland monitors indicators for political discrimination, cultural and economic exclusion and persecution on 283 minority groups around the world, and has found a significant link between conflict and those forms of denial of rights.

B. Early warning indicators

40. Minority rights violations are often among the root causes of conflicts that have long gestation periods, root causes grounded in grievances that may bubble under the surface for years, or even decades, before violent conflict breaks out. Incorporating minority rights indicators into early warning systems would enable an earlier identification of potential conflicts.¹⁰ Other more technical early warning indicators, such as small arms flows and movements of displaced peoples, tend to reflect a situation that is already rapidly spiraling into violence. By the time those indicators trigger attention, grievances may have festered for decades, perhaps generations – generations of lost opportunities to heal rifts, avert conflict and build a cohesive society.

41. Some analysts worry about the risk of raising false alarms by flagging concerns at too early a stage. But if the response to an early warning of patterns of discrimination is to work with the Government to set up programmes that correct those patterns, then that has its own value, regardless of the impact on conflict prevention.

42. Clearly it is necessary to combine monitoring of patterns of economic and political exclusion, for example, with an analysis of the political and social context, allowing for an identification of the risk of escalation that is as accurate as possible. Better insight is needed into why certain situations of systematic exclusion escalate from chronic grievances to violent conflict. It may be due to numerous factors, such as the building up of pressure over time to intolerable levels; regime change (many studies have found a link between political transitions and increased incidence of conflict); or a specific, highly symbolic trigger, perhaps linked to an affront to a community's identity such as the denial of status to a minority language.¹¹

⁷ F. Stewart, G. K. Brown and A. Langer, "Major findings and conclusions on the relationship between horizontal inequalities and conflict", in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multi-ethnic Societies*, Frances Stewart, ed. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁸ David A. Hamburg and Cyrus R. Vance, *Preventing Deadly Conflict* (New York, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997), p. 29.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁰ S. Srinivasan, *Minority Rights, Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Lessons from Darfur* (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2006).

¹¹ Denial of status to minority language has been linked to the onset of conflict in both the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua in the 1980s and in Sri Lanka in the 1950s. See S. Brunnegger, *From*

43. It has been argued that early warning systems need to combine the collection of disaggregated quantitative data with more in-depth qualitative analysis.¹² Such a course of action would enable the identification of complex interactions between political, social and economic factors that help determine whether violent conflict will break out, and if so, when.

II. Protection of minority rights: a national tool for avoiding violent conflicts

44. Conflict prevention is not the sole positive outcome of respect for minority rights. Societies flourish when all voices are heard, when all opinions are considered; when all citizens participate; and when the talent that exists in all communities is enabled to contribute to political institutions. Inclusion is good for societies as a whole, not just for those previously left out. Consequently, creating the conditions for the effective participation of minorities should be considered by States as an integral aspect of good governance and a key priority in their efforts to ensure equality and non-discrimination.

45. Minorities are too often seen as a threat to the State and/or national unity. Governments may hold the erroneous views that national unity is fragile or that new States can be achieved only through the denial or disregard of distinctive aspects of the identity of minorities; that demands by minorities for an equal voice in policymaking will dissipate central authority; that respect for minority languages produces cleavages between ethnic groups or translates into prohibitive government expenditures; or that culturally defined production methods have no place in a modern economy. In such situations Governments may become nervous when ethnic, religious or linguistic groups attempt to assert their identity. There may be an assumption that what those groups want is to separate themselves from the State. However, many conflicts involving minorities start as peaceful demands to be included in the society on the basis of equal treatment.¹³

46. Many States are engaged in ongoing efforts to accommodate the interests of diverse communities. It is critical that the process be guided by the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Communities that may be more populous, that have greater disruptive capacities or military strength or that may be more successful in commerce may emerge at an early stage as the principle contenders for distribution of political power and State resources. However, under such conditions, minority rights must be prioritized, enabling members of all minority groups to participate effectively in decisions affecting them and in all aspects of society. Efforts must be made to give voice to the diversity of members within minority communities, including women, youth and the elderly.

47. National human rights institutions that comply with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (“the Paris Principles”)¹⁴ can also play a constructive role in promoting the positive valuing of diversity and addressing issues that could cause conflict. Such institutions may include designated commissioners for minority issues, or separate, dedicated institutions may be established.

Conflict to Autonomy in Nicaragua: Lessons Learnt (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2007).

¹² J. A. Goldstone, “Using quantitative and qualitative models to forecast instability”, Special Report No. 204 (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace, 2008).

¹³ See International Council on Human Rights Policy, *Negotiating Justice? Human Rights and Peace Agreements* (Geneva, 2006), chap. VII.

¹⁴ General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex.

A. Effective participation in political life and decision-making

48. The effective and meaningful participation of minorities in the political arena can be a pivotal element in avoiding violent conflict. While members of minorities have the right to participate in decision-making processes, particularly those that affect them, minorities are greatly underrepresented in the political processes and governing institutions of most countries for a variety of reasons. They may be intentionally restricted from participation or inadvertently disadvantaged by laws or policies, or there may be a lack of political will to dismantle structural barriers to the full and equal participation of minorities.

49. States have significant leeway to decide, in consultation with minority communities, the modalities by which political participation can be achieved. Those measures may include the devolution of certain powers by means of a federal or autonomy arrangement; electoral systems based on proportional representation; a system of reserved seats for minorities in parliament; or the facilitated participation in the electoral process of political parties representing the interests of minorities. Most importantly, the modality for political inclusion must afford minorities genuine influence. Tokenism or State interference in the process of identifying political representatives, for example, may lead to deeper frustrations. Further, full respect for freedoms of expression and assembly is critical.

50. The most appropriate system will depend on the specificities of the situation, including how populous the communities are, whether they are geographically dispersed or concentrated, the aspirations of the minority groups and how well integrated they are into the broader society. The flexibility of the minority rights framework makes it well suited to the compromises necessary in processes of negotiating solutions, diffusing tensions and avoiding violent conflicts. In November 2009, the second session of the Forum on Minority Issues focused on the issue of minorities and effective political participation and produced a set of practical recommendations for States and other actors (A/HRC/13/25, para. 5).

51. Respecting the right of minorities to political participation at times of peace contributes to harmonious societies and opens non-violent avenues for the grievances of minorities to be addressed. When violent conflict does occur in diverse societies, applying a minority rights-based approach to consultations regarding peace agreements will require that all communities affected by the conflict, including those that are not active parties to it, be able to participate in the settlement process. That approach should counteract a tendency common in many conflict situations, whereby Governments, and the international community, focus predominately on addressing the demands of communities that are linked to armed movements, which may result in peace agreements that guarantee rights for some communities at the expense of others.

B. Protection of cultural identity

52. At the core of minority rights are the protection and preservation of culturally distinctive identities within societies. The denigration or suppression of the defining identity of a person or group can be a powerful factor in generating conflict. Repressive measures to control or restrict religious or traditional practices or force assimilation can galvanize opposition and create a common platform around which targeted communities can rally. Language, in particular, is a potent vehicle of culture. The imposition on minority communities of a majority language, either through teaching in public schools or formal prohibitions on the use of minority languages, has been a spark that has ignited many violent clashes in every region.

53. The 1992 Declaration on Minorities, in article 4, paragraphs 2 and 3, establishes positive obligations requiring that States take measures to create favourable conditions to

enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs. It also requires that States take appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn and have instruction in their mother tongue.

54. Central to the identity of communities are their historical narratives. Inclusion, in that respect, can be achieved through recognition in national policy statements, history textbooks for schools, museums that celebrate the varied cultures of a country and the contributions of all groups to the national identity, and national days of celebration, to name only a few models. Nevertheless, the histories and contributions of minorities are rarely adequately reflected, which contributes to a sense of alienation and exclusion.

55. To denigrate a community's identity as inferior or stereotype it as violent, criminal or "foreign" is discriminatory, a violation of rights and may constitute incitement to racial or religious hatred. It impacts negatively on community members' sense of inclusion in the national identity and encourages prejudicial attitudes and even violent attacks on the community by members of the public. The slope is steep and slippery between statements of disrespect coming from national leaders and hate crimes committed by individuals who feel they have been given license.

C. Non-discrimination and equality

56. The reality – and often the perception – of discrimination in access to any kind of resources, whether in relation to jobs, land ownership, political power or natural resources, is a strong driver of conflict. The 1992 Declaration on Minorities states, in article 4, paragraph 1, that "States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law".

57. Economic exclusion is a cause, a manifestation and a consequence of discrimination against minorities, both in the developed and in the developing world. Minorities are often discriminated against when they seek employment and are often poorly represented even in public sector employment and despite legislation that bans discrimination in both public and private sectors. They may face barriers in accessing credit or loans to begin small businesses and may live in the poorest regions or remote areas that offer limited prospects for their economic development. Equally, large-scale economic development projects or commercial activities carried out on the lands and territories where minorities live, without their prior consultation, have had negative impacts, including displacement, the perpetuation of poverty and, in some cases, violence.

58. Several factors and challenges can exacerbate this exclusion of minorities, including deteriorating economic conditions, ethnic tensions and rising discrimination. In some countries, unequal regional distribution of resources and services as well as lack of basic infrastructure in regions where minorities live often have the effect of excluding them from fully exercising their economic and social rights. The past decade has also brought into the picture new and unanticipated challenges, including the global food and economic crises that have been proven to have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups and minorities.

59. Consequently, the rights of minorities to participate effectively in economic life must be fully taken into account by Governments seeking to promote equality at every level. From implementing non-discrimination in employment to enforcing corporate responsibility principles and developing national economic development and international development assistance schemes, Governments face the constant challenge of ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected and that they benefit as equal stakeholders in society.

In their response to the current global crisis, development agencies, financial institutions and other actors involved in international cooperation also face the challenge of ensuring that measures taken do not negatively impact minority rights.

60. In countries where political power is seen to be concentrated in the hands of one or a few identity groups, it is common for those groups to be disproportionately represented in the public service, which can be a powerful source of tension. The adequate representation of minorities at all levels and in all branches of the criminal justice system, for example, can have particularly important implications for relations between disadvantaged communities and the Government. Negative encounters with police or security forces at the local level shape minority perceptions of their treatment and acceptance by the State.

61. Economic exclusion and denial of access to quality education bring about a sense of despair, destroy hopes of upward mobility and are often a central grievance and a source of tensions. International standards on non-discrimination place an obligation on States to institute affirmative action policies to correct historical patterns of exclusion and enable members of minorities to achieve equality. Many States have recognized the corrosive nature of inequalities and have implemented such measures. Affirmative action programmes can, however, be a point of contention for majority communities, in particular when poorer members of majority communities perceive that they are losing out. It is important that Governments exercise leadership in educating the larger public, demonstrating that such programmes are based on the principles of justice and equal opportunity and result in fairer and more stable society.

62. Poor education and economic opportunities commonly affect women members of disadvantaged minorities disproportionately. Women may face a scarcity of employment opportunities and discriminatory hiring practices based on prejudice against their minority group. Women generally share a disproportionate burden of care-giving, especially when poverty denies any possible respite or help. The heavy burden imposed on individuals and entire communities by the lack of options often fuels a disturbing culture of domestic violence.

63. A frequent source of conflict worldwide is discrimination and inequality in relation to land and property. For minority communities, often located in remote rural areas, the land and territories on which they live are a source of food security and income generation as well as being vital to the preservation of minority cultures, traditions and collective identity. However, some minorities find that their rights to own, occupy and use land are limited or violated and they may find themselves displaced or evicted, in some cases to make way for national economic development schemes, the activities of multinational corporations or for natural resources development. Land and property issues should consequently be given close attention in respect of conflict prevention.

64. Programmes to promote development implemented by Governments and external donors often fail to take into account the inequalities between communities, the unique circumstances of minorities or the possible need for special measures to ensure that minority communities also benefit. Minorities may be adversely affected through displacement by large-scale projects such as dams and natural resource extraction, or as a result of the negative environmental impact. As noted in the 2007 annual report of the independent expert, conflict prevention is one reason why monitoring poverty alleviation among minorities is crucial: if strategies are successful for some groups but not for minorities, inequalities will increase and so too may tension. Inclusive participation strategies for poverty reduction are proven and effective conflict prevention measures (see A/HRC/4/9, para. 43).

III. A minority rights perspective at the international level: a tool for conflict prevention

65. According to a statistical assessment carried out by Minority Rights Group International, over 55 per cent of violent conflicts of a significant intensity between 2007 and 2009 had at their core violations of minority rights or tensions between communities. In a further 22 per cent of conflicts, minority issues had emerged or receded in the course of the evolution of the conflict. Those figures indicate that Governments, donors and intergovernmental organizations need to allocate significant attention and resources to minority issues as sources of conflict. However, the current picture in this regard is mixed.

A. United Nations institutional framework

66. The tragic events in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia gave new impetus to efforts by the United Nations to protect minorities – described by the Secretary-General as “genocide’s most frequent targets”¹⁵. In 2004, the Secretary-General established the mandate of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The principal objective of the Special Adviser is to advise the Secretary-General and the Security Council on actions to protect vulnerable populations from genocide. The Office of the Special Adviser attempts to identify a range of potential threats to minority populations at an early stage and make recommendations regarding constructive management of cultural diversity issues.¹⁶

67. An analysis framework is used by the Special Adviser’s office to identify threats to minority communities at an early stage. In addition to genocide-specific indicators, such as the demonization of minority communities and a history of genocide in the country, it includes indicators of broader significance to minorities, such as conflicts over land, power, security and expressions of group identity, such as language, religion and culture, and attacks on cultural and religious property and symbols.¹⁷ The Special Adviser’s office is privy to an enormous flow of information generated by sources inside and external to the United Nations system. The Special Adviser’s gauge for sifting through that information flow is calibrated for precursors to genocide: a focus that is limited, fortunately, to a small number of situations. There is a need for additional tools that focus on chronic abuses of minority rights at the earliest stages, to identify situations needing more upstream preventive action.

68. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, States Members of the United Nations conceptualized a principle that is of prime importance to the protection of minorities: the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – “the responsibility to protect”. This concept recognizes the duty of the international community to intervene to protect populations when their own Governments cannot or lack the will to do so. It prioritizes above all the use of appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, before legitimate force is contemplated. The focus of the institutional mechanisms that are being developed to implement the concept of the responsibility to protect will be limited to specific crimes.¹⁸ A broader focus on minority rights protections as a tool for protection from conflict will need to be the task of other mechanisms.

¹⁵ SG/SM/9245, 7 April 2004.

¹⁶ Interview with member of the staff of the Special Adviser’s office, 10 May 2010.

¹⁷ See www.un.org/preventgenocide/adviser/.

¹⁸ See the report of the Secretary-General on early warning, assessment and the responsibility to protect (A/64/864).

69. Several United Nations offices and agencies have information assessment, early warning and conflict prevention functions. The Department of Political Affairs is the lead agency for conflict prevention and peacemaking. Within the Department, the standby team of mediation experts, an innovative unit established in March 2008, plays an important role. The team is on call to provide expertise on specific issues to United Nations initiatives to mediate in situations of conflict or potential conflict. This team has provided support and advice to peacemaking and dialogue efforts in several situations involving minorities, including Darfur, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines. The Department has a focal point on indigenous peoples, but not one on minorities. The standby team also does not include a professional with comprehensive expertise on minority rights.

70. The Inter-Agency Framework for Coordination on Preventative Action (Framework team) is an informal forum for inter-agency exchange of information and collaboration involving 21 different United Nations entities (A/64/864, paras. 7-13). The Framework team is a mechanism that shares information on potential crises and works together to support the development of inter-agency conflict prevention initiatives. As such it is a key part of the United Nations conflict prevention architecture. The Framework team is designed to support the United Nations country team in countries that show early signs that a situation, whether at the regional, national or sub-national level, is likely to lead to violence. The programme initiatives are designed to address the issues at the early upstream stage in the conflict cycle, so that the situation does not escalate.

71. Good practice exists at the policy level and in field operations of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. UNDP operates an early warning system in some of its in-country programmes, often using sophisticated computer mapping, which is designed to map specific local conditions, such as movements of security forces and displaced peoples, presence of weapons, and availability of basic services. A process of broad consultations with local communities is frequently incorporated. UNDP has developed a capacity to identify the root causes of conflicts, notably through deployment of peace and development advisers to country teams who help in conducting conflict analyses. Experience has shown that context-specific systems that mix qualitative and quantitative indicators and political analysis are effective, if highly resource intensive.

72. The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, a conflict prevention bureau within UNDP, currently has no focal point on minorities either; however, UNDP has recently enhanced its understanding of minority issues in development processes through a series of workshops resulting in a resource guide and toolkit for UNDP field staff, which includes guidance on addressing conflict situations (see paras. 15 and 16 above).

73. UNICEF both generates and monitors country-specific data that may reveal situations of emerging conflict. Its activities focusing on the most marginalized and vulnerable women and children position it uniquely to play an early prevention role with respect to minority rights. Given that minority children are often the most disadvantaged, there is a sound basis for the engagement of UNICEF in minority issues. With a wide network of offices worldwide, UNICEF is in an important position to encourage the introduction of minority issues on Government public policy agendas, to support Government efforts and directly deliver assistance to minority children and women. The UNICEF field presence is common in conflict zones, and its focus on protection issues makes it an institution with key relevance to conflict prevention. At UNICEF headquarters, there is a cluster of professionals whose portfolios include minority rights issues.

74. Discussions about pooling the outputs of the early warning systems of the various funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations and the possible development of a common system have not made significant progress owing to the complexities of the systems and the different needs of each body. An achievable aim could be to pool best practices to be made available to United Nations Headquarters and in-

country teams, particularly with regard to innovative new practice using computer technology to compile and process large quantities of context-specific data.

75. The special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the independent expert on minority issues, and the treaty monitoring bodies are well placed to identify the warning signs of impending conflicts, including those affecting minorities. In October 2009, a United Nations round table on special procedures entitled “Early Warning and Emerging Issues”¹⁹ was held in New York. Participants emphasized the contribution that these mechanisms can make to a better understanding of complex situations, for example involving systemic exclusion and discrimination of certain minority groups. Participants recommended strengthening the capacity of the special procedures to contribute to early warning, including by ensuring that their recommendations were communicated more effectively to the United Nations field presences, and ensuring that data revealing patterns of severe abuses were communicated as early warnings.

76. Historically, channels of communication between the human rights institutions in Geneva and the peace and security bodies in New York have not been optimal. A number of significant improvements have taken place, notably the enhancement of the status of a New York presence of OHCHR, now headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, and regular briefings to the Security Council by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

77. Reflecting on the experience of regional inter-governmental organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established in 2003 to consider how the United Nations should address newly arising security, environmental and developmental challenges, recommended that the United Nations build on the experience of regional organizations in developing frameworks for minority rights (A/59/565, para. 94).

B. Regional organizations

78. OSCE has established a specific mechanism to address conflicts involving minorities, the High Commissioner on National Minorities.²⁰ The High Commissioner acts as an early warning and early action mechanism, primarily through the use of preventive diplomacy. The High Commissioner can visit countries, engage with representatives of all sides, and propose constructive solutions based on a broad knowledge of approaches worldwide. The High Commissioner has developed a number of guidelines to help national and international actors to address issues that have a potential to cause conflict, including education, language rights, political participation and the involvement of “kin States” (States whose majority community is ethnically related to a minority in a neighbouring State).

79. Preventive diplomacy can be most effective when tensions first arise between a Government and a minority, and they are relatively susceptible to third party engagement. Envoys may work discreetly and all parties may be willing to calmly present their concerns, and to explore possible solutions. When a situation develops from these initial tensions to actual incidences of violence, positions begin to harden and resistance to compromise grows. It becomes more difficult for leaders to make compromises as the depth of feeling and emotion among their constituencies increases.

¹⁹ Available from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/docs/BPRoundTable.doc>.

²⁰ Available from www.osce.org/hcnm/13022.html.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

80. Substantial steps have been taken over recent years to reposition international engagement with conflict situations from the point of reaction to a point of identification of early warnings. There is mounting evidence that one of the earliest indicators of potential violence is the chronic disregard of minority rights. Early warning systems must have the necessary expertise to be alert to such indicators. While there is already a substantial flow of information to early warning mechanisms within the United Nations system, a focus on minority rights should be strengthened.

81. Additionally, while there has been added emphasis placed on the prevention of certain specific crimes, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, violent conflicts that do not fit those definitions may also warrant additional attention.

82. As the Secretary-General affirmed in his report, early warning does not equate with early action (A/64/864, para. 19). States and international organizations remain reluctant to take action until violence has started. That is regrettable. Too much of the engagement of the international community is too late on the conflict continuum that spans from grievances to violence. As conflict situations escalate, the human costs on the ground and the political and financial costs to the international community escalate exponentially.

83. One of the possible benefits of placing more emphasis on minority rights as a tool for conflict prevention may be that it not only facilitates earlier warnings of troubled societies, but also that the corresponding corrective measures are relatively less costly politically. That would increase the likelihood of action being taken earlier.

84. Despite some excellent practices in the field, there is no mechanism for or consistent practice of ensuring that minority issues are mainstreamed across the in-country work of entities in the United Nations system, in accordance with article 9 of the 1992 Declaration on Minorities, even in countries where those issues are at the core of local conflicts. At the Headquarters level, in the Department of Political Affairs and in the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, know-how on minority rights could be enhanced to facilitate the development of policies and practices sensitive to minorities. Appropriate training programmes and resources are required for staff throughout the United Nations system, to assist in the early identification by decision makers at the highest level of tensions involving minorities.

A. Recommendations for the national level

85. To fulfil their human rights obligations and also as a measure to increase stability and improve inclusive governance, States should implement fully the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, through a process of consultation and cooperation with minority groups.

86. States should implement comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including measures to prohibit discrimination by both State and private actors. Legislation must provide for effective, transparent enforcement mechanisms which can be accessed easily by all.

87. States should monitor the participation of minorities in all areas of economic life, including allocation of jobs within public services, to ensure that members of all communities have equal access without discrimination. Requirements, including

language qualifications for public service jobs, should not result in the effective exclusion of minorities.

88. States should monitor economic development projects to assess their impact on minorities, to ensure that they benefit equally with others, and that there is no detrimental effect on their rights.

89. Where there are historical patterns of exclusion of members of minorities from employment, business and education opportunities, States should implement capacity-building programmes and other affirmative action measures to enable members of minorities, including minority women, to compete on an equal footing.

90. States should collect disaggregated data concerning the access of all sectors of society to economic opportunities and political decision-making. Data should be disaggregated by ethnicity and gender to highlight patterns of inequality that have an impact on minority women in different ways than on minority men. Data collection programmes should be designed with the involvement of representatives of minority communities, should allow for diverse forms of self-identification and should provide effective guarantees of data protection.

91. Public proclamations regarding national identity, for example in the constitution, and key national symbols should be fully inclusive, and should not exclude segments of a country's population nor deny, explicitly or implicitly, the full diversity of the population.

92. Education curricula should avoid stereotypes and provide a realistic and non-discriminatory image of all communities within society. States should ensure that members of minorities are able to adopt the necessary measures to ensure the protection and promotion of their identity, such as providing mother tongue education and religious education. Education at all levels should have the goal of enabling members of minorities to compete on an equal footing for jobs and other opportunities while preserving their distinct identities.

93. States should involve members of all minority groups in conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.

94. National human rights institutions should have mandates that explicitly include the protection and promotion of minority rights and expertise in the field of minority rights. Consideration should be given to establishing dedicated consultative and advisory bodies to help ensure that minority issues are adequately addressed at the national and local levels.

B. Recommendations for the international level

95. Minority rights expertise should be strengthened and integrated comprehensively across the United Nations system. Given the prevalence of conflicts involving identity issues, permanent in-house expertise on minority issues within the principal agencies and departments working on conflict prevention would be highly beneficial.

96. United Nations staff working on conflict prevention and peace-building, particularly those working on policy, analysis and early warning and in country teams, should receive comprehensive minority rights training.

97. Consideration should be given to adding an expert on minority rights to the standby team of mediation experts in the Department of Political Affairs. Additional consideration could be given to involving the team in country situations at an earlier

point on the conflict continuum that runs between the expression of grievances to the outbreak of violence.

98. The United Nations should develop an inter-agency guidance note on addressing minority issues to include, inter alia: how to consult with minority communities in order to capture the diversity of positions; how to involve civil society organizations working with minority communities in United Nations conflict prevention work; and how to develop context-specific early warning indicators.

99. United Nations country teams should analyse the extent to which discrimination on ethnic, religious and linguistic grounds creates disparities in outcomes relating to their programming. Country teams should promote and support the collection of disaggregated data on minorities. All existing programmes should be assessed and revised based on that analysis. Minority communities should participate fully at all stages of programming from research and design to monitoring and evaluation.

100. Effective steps should be taken to ensure that the national staff composition of the United Nations country teams is inclusive of persons from minority communities.

101. The United Nations should continue to make efforts to share the experiences of a variety of agencies with early warning methodologies, including those systems which combine quantitative and qualitative indicators, and should incorporate minority rights indicators so that all agencies, departments and country offices can draw on the best available practice.

102. Communications between the human rights institutions in Geneva and the peace and security institutions in New York should be strengthened further. Regular communications at a working level between the country desk officers of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and their colleagues in the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would promote the sharing of information and common understanding of minority rights situations in countries.
