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

Written statement* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Promoting human rights through a declaration on diversity

The Sikh Human Rights Group supports comprehensive and plural approaches to promoting human rights and diversity and proposes a Declaration on Diversity to compliment the many instruments tackling discrimination, inequalities and marginalization.

A Declaration on Diversity can encourage States to embrace diversity as a natural phenomenon. So far concentration has been to promote diversity and plurality through anti-discrimination conventions and legislation. The wider acceptance of diversity in State policies can be strengthened through positive approaches too which are less adversarial. States committing Diversity through a Declaration that can inspire as intended goals.

As a common declaration at the UN. It can lead to regular discussions with show case best practices and policies that have worked in different countries. A Declaration on Diversity can be considered under Agenda 9 and as a development of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

Currently the Conventions and Treaties are based on rights claimed under an ideal set of norms. Individuals and communities have to assert those rights. They often have to go through a political and legal process to ensure their rights are respected and protected by the State. Under this dynamics, there are those who have the power to grant and respect the rights of others and there are those who are dependent on potential abusers refraining from abuse. If those with the power to abuse do violate rights, then redress has to be sought through legal or political means and make abusers powerless from further abusing.

SHRG considers that 'rights' are the building blocks of equality, respect and dignity in the modern age. Rights are fundamental to the institution of State and its obligation to the individuals. Nevertheless this can be strengthened by affirmative action.

Additional, different and positive approaches can complement and strengthen fundamental rights and the various international treaties. A Declaration on Diversity inclusive of the different rights and going further than the UNESCO Declaration on Diversity can encourage States to sign up to some or all of its aspects with intentions to adopt best practices and affirmative action to promote diversity.

A Declaration does not supplant existing instruments which are necessary to assert individual and collective expectations of being treated with dignity, respect and equality.

We propose that a comprehensive Declaration on Diversity drawn from various treaties and conventions and which will be wide ranging, promoting inclusiveness and positive action in areas such as but not limited to race, ethnicity, cultural, religious, lifestyle, gender, disability, age, political thought, linguistics, environment and biodiversity.

A Declaration will also encourage States to interpret diversity as a positive phenomenon rather than an obligation met sometimes with reluctance or promoted consequent to adversarial activity through political and legal challenges. A Declaration is not binding, hence it will have a gradual, accumulative and reformative purpose without the State feeling defensive. We often see that when States are challenged on diversity from a human rights perspective, they tend to deny abuses or lack of rights rather than accept it as a problem to be redressed.

We hope to encourage a debate on this so that diversity becomes a norm rather than a political issue. We hope that the idea of a Declaration on Diversity will be taken up.

SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP
