



General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 September 2025

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Forum on Minority Issues
Eighteenth session
Geneva, 27 and 28 November 2025

Concept note by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, on the eighteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, concerning the contribution of minorities to diverse, resilient and peaceful societies



I. Introduction and background to the Forum on Minority Issues

1. The eighteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues will be held on 27 and 28 November 2025 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 6/15 and 19/23.

II. Theme of the eighteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues

2. The theme of the eighteenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues will be “The contribution of minorities to diverse, resilient and peaceful societies”.

3. Three panel discussions are to be organized, on the following topics:

(a) Building trust and social cohesion: addressing barriers to peaceful coexistence;

(b) Recognizing the full contribution of minorities to the economic, social, cultural, political and institutional fabric of society;

(c) Amplifying minority voices in peacebuilding, accountability and transitional justice processes.

III. Background

4. In the preamble to the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the General Assembly considered that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contributed to the political and social stability of States in which they lived. This foundational principle reflects a consensus within international human rights law that diversity is not a threat but a strength and is essential to building peaceful, just and cohesive societies.

5. Article 1 of the Declaration enshrines the obligation of States to protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities and to encourage the conditions for the promotion of that identity. Article 2 affirms that persons belonging to minorities have the right to enjoy their culture, use their language and practise their religion, and provides for their effective participation in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life, as well as in decision-making processes on matters affecting them. These provisions echo article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as authoritatively interpreted by the Human Rights Committee in its general comment No. 23 (1994), in which it underlined that “the protection of these rights is directed towards ensuring the survival and continued development of the cultural, religious and social identity of the minorities concerned, thus enriching the fabric of society as a whole” (para. 9).

6. During its eighteenth session, the Forum on Minority Issues will highlight the contributions of minorities to stable, resilient and peaceful societies while identifying the challenges faced by societies in fully embracing diversity and the positive contributions that minorities can bring, through their unique characteristics, perspectives and differences.

7. However, the coexistence of minorities with dominant groups is often perceived as a threat to national identity or territorial unity. Indeed, most nation States have historically been closely linked to the idea of a singular national, ethnic, religious or linguistic identity. Minorities, by embodying cultural, ethnic, caste, linguistic or religious differences, are often seen as deviating from this constructed norm. This perception is often compounded by fears of national and territorial fragmentation, historical conflict legacies and a lack of intercultural dialogue and education, and is at times deliberately instrumentalized for political purposes.

8. At its eighteenth session, the Forum will demonstrate that, on the contrary, when minorities are respected, included and empowered, they contribute actively to cultural richness, social innovation and the overall cohesion and prosperity of society as a whole. The

Forum will emphasize that peaceful coexistence and cohesion between dominant groups and minorities are essential for conflict prevention, sustainable development and building stable and resilient societies.

9. The Forum will highlight good practices and practical measures that are based on the full and effective participation of minorities in public, cultural, social and economic life. These practices contribute to preventing and mitigating tensions between minorities and dominant groups, ultimately fostering diverse, resilient and peaceful societies.

10. The theme of the eighteenth session of the Forum aligns with Sustainable Development Goals 10, on reducing inequalities within and among countries, and 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In terms of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Goals and their targets, minorities remain among the most marginalized and structurally excluded populations who should not be left behind. Ensuring their proper inclusion in society as a whole while respecting their identities is therefore essential for envisioning a future in which reduced inequalities and access to justice are central to sustainable peace (see the report on the right to identity of persons belonging to minorities of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues).¹

11. The Forum will acknowledge the challenges linked to the complex reality of contemporary societies, in which minorities often face tensions not only with dominant groups, but also sometimes within and between minority groups. These tensions are frequently rooted in long-standing structural discrimination, political and economic exclusion and unequal access to basic services. Such challenges are felt especially acutely by marginalized groups within minorities, including women, youth, older persons, migrants, persons with disabilities and persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, who face intersectional discrimination both from dominant groups and from within their own communities.

12. At the same time, the Forum will seek to underscore the transformative potential of inclusive societies, in which institutions and frameworks should be based on representation, participation, non-discrimination and equality principles to empower minority communities. In such settings, minorities are not merely protected but are recognized as active agents of peace, justice and collective resilience, contributing to shaping a more just and cohesive future for society. Marginalized groups within minorities should equally be recognized for the important contributions they make.

13. The eighteenth session of the Forum provides an opportunity to examine existing best practices at the local, national, regional and international levels that demonstrate the active role of minority communities in advancing multilayered identities, promoting social justice and strengthening societal resilience. It will be focused on identifying concrete solutions, practical tools, inclusive policies and initiatives that facilitate the participation of minorities, ensuring that they can thrive, not in isolation, but as equal contributors to societies.

14. The Forum will follow up on and build upon the recommendations prepared at its earlier sessions, in particular its seventeenth session, on minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses,² its sixteenth session, on the theme “Minorities and cohesive societies: equality, social inclusion and socioeconomic participation”,³ and its fourteenth session, on conflict prevention and the protection of the human rights of minorities.⁴ It will also follow up on the reports of Special Rapporteurs on minority issues, notably the report to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-fifth session on promoting diversity on minority issues to strengthen the universal dimension of human rights⁵ and the reports to the General Assembly on institutional designs promoting minorities’ effective participation towards diverse and inclusive societies⁶ and on effective promotion of

¹ [A/HRC/58/54](#).

² See [A/HRC/58/69](#).

³ See [A/HRC/55/70](#).

⁴ See [A/HRC/49/81](#).

⁵ [A/HRC/55/51](#).

⁶ [A/79/169](#).

the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.⁷

IV. General objectives

15. The 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. The Forum also provides a platform for identifying and analysing best practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives for the further implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

16. At its eighteenth session, the Forum will:

(a) Examine the root causes of exclusion, discrimination and intergroup tensions, including entrenched inequalities, social stigma and the persistent invisibility of minority groups;

(b) Highlight best practices for preventing social tensions that may arise from the coexistence of persons belonging to minorities and dominant groups, focusing on both institutional discrimination and intergroup dynamics in daily life;

(c) Analyse how the contributions of minorities to all aspects of society can be fairly recognized and meaningfully integrated into national narratives, institutions and policies through inclusive, multi-stakeholder and multilevel engagement;

(d) Explore the unique perspectives and essential contributions of persons belonging to minorities in rebuilding inclusive, stable, just and sustainable institutions in societies in transition (including post-conflict settings or following a regime change, with particular attention to their roles in peacebuilding processes);

(e) Identify and analyse challenges, opportunities, practices and initiatives that strengthen the inclusion of minorities, in line with the principles and rights enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international instruments;

(f) Support efforts to mainstream minority rights across the institutions, mechanisms and initiatives of the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels, including through improved coordination among United Nations mechanisms, bodies, specialized agencies, funds and programmes;

(g) Make thematic recommendations to be reported to the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, in accordance with Council resolution 19/23.

17. Also at its eighteenth session, the Forum will examine State practices through legislation, policies and programmes, alongside civil society initiatives. It will emphasize the prominent contributions of other key stakeholders, including international and regional organizations and various forms of cooperation, in achieving the above-mentioned goals. Particular focus will be placed on the empowerment of minorities through individual and collective expression as a means of fostering social cohesion and reinforcing their essential role in building inclusive and stable societies.

V. Participants

18. The Forum on Minority Issues is 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 and academics, experts and non-governmental organizations working on minority issues; the Forum is also open to the

⁷ [A/70/212](#).

participation of other non-governmental organizations whose aims and purposes are in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

VI. Areas of discussion

19. The focus of the discussion will address the following overarching themes:

(a) Building trust and social cohesion: addressing barriers to peaceful coexistence.

Key discussion areas will include:

(i) Identifying the structural drivers of mistrust, exclusion and conflict between minority and dominant populations or among minority groups, including inequality, discrimination and invisibility;

(ii) Highlighting State- and community-led initiatives that successfully defuse tensions, achieve equality, address marginalization and promote peaceful coexistence and cohesion in diverse societies, including community-based strategies, intercultural, inter-caste or interfaith dialogue mechanisms, multilingualism and mediation efforts;

(iii) Examining the role of education, media, languages, the arts and other policies in countering stigmatization and fostering inclusive social norms;

(b) Recognizing the full contribution of minorities to the economic, social, cultural, political and institutional fabric of society. Key discussion areas will include:

(i) Exploring how societies can fairly recognize and integrate the diverse economic, social, political and cultural contributions of minorities into national narratives and public and private institutions;

(ii) Highlighting ways in which minorities are strengthening civic engagement, development, advancing democratic institutions and reforms and promoting respect for human rights;

(iii) Emphasizing a multi-stakeholder and multilevel approach by which minority communities, Governments, civil society, religious leaders, academia, businesses and other actors collaborate to build inclusive narratives and policies;

(c) Amplifying minority voices in peacebuilding, accountability and transitional justice processes. Key discussion areas will include:

(i) Recognizing the critical role that persons belonging to minorities play in shaping inclusive peacebuilding and transitional justice efforts through their unique experiences and insights that are essential for rebuilding societies grounded in justice, accountability and diversity;

(ii) Identifying the contributions of minority-led initiatives in conflict resolution, dialogue and reconciliation;

(iii) Identifying legal and institutional reforms that promote minority participation, representation and protection in post-conflict and transitional contexts.

20. An intersectional perspective will be applied to all areas of the discussion to address the particular situations of vulnerability, as well as the vital contributions of persons belonging to minorities who are at the intersection of diverse forms of discrimination, particularly minority women.

VII. Inputs

21. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues encourages all participants to contribute to the discussion and dialogue by sharing experiences and views about the main areas of discussion of the Forum on Minority Issues.

VIII. Outcome

22. A summary of the discussion of the Forum on Minority Issues at its eighteenth session, based on the dialogue and contributions of the participants, will be prepared by the Chair of the Forum. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues will prepare a report on the recommendations of the Forum for submission to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-first session.
