United Nations Forum on Minority Issues

CONCEPT NOTE

18th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues

27 – 28 November 2025

The Contribution of Minorities to Diverse, Resilient, and Peaceful Societies

1. The 18th session of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues will be convened on 27 and 28 November 2025 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 6/15 of 28 September 2007 and resolution 19/23 of 23 March 2012.

A. Theme of the 2025 Forum

2. The theme of the 18th UN Forum on Minority Issues is the **contribution of minorities to diverse, resilient, and peaceful societies.**

3. The three panels are organized with the following **subthemes:**

- **Building trust and social cohesion**: addressing ignorance, prejudice, and other obstacles to peaceful and harmonious coexistence between ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and dominant groups;
- **Recognizing the full contribution of minorities** to the economic, social, cultural, political, and institutional fabric of our societies; and
- **Ensuring meaningful inclusion of minorities in peacebuilding, accountability and transitional justice processes**.

B. Background

4. The Preamble of the 1992 UN General Assembly Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities,

affirms that “the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live." 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 1992 Declaration enshrines the obligation of States to protect the existence and identity of minorities and to promote the conditions for their flourishing. Article 2 further affirms the rights of persons belonging to minorities to enjoy their culture, use their language, and practice 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 are echoing Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as authoritatively interpreted in Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 23 (1994), which underlines that “the protection of these rights aims to ensure the survival and continued development of the cultural, religious, and social identity of the minorities concerned, **thereby enriching the fabric of society as a whole**”.

6. The 18th session of the Forum on Minority Issues intends to **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. This year, the Forum on Minority Issues 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 the society as a whole. The Forum emphasizes 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 also 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 18th session of the Forum also **aligns with Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). Within the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development or the SDGs and its 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 where reduced inequalities and access to justice are central to sustainable peace (see the Special Rapporteur's report on the right to identity of persons belonging to minorities, A/HRC/58/54).

11. The Forum acknowledges the **challenges** linked to the complex reality of contemporary societies, where 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 especially acutely felt by marginalized groups within minorities, including women, youth, older persons, migrants, persons with disabilities, and persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, among others, who face intersectional discrimination from dominant groups and from within their own communities.

12. At the same time, the Forum seeks to underscore the **transformative potential** of inclusive societies, where 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 18th session of the Forum also 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 multi-layered identities, promoting social justice, and strengthening societal resilience. It will focus 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 on the recommendations** prepared at earlier Forum sessions, more particularly at the "17th session on minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses", the 16th session regarding "Minorities and Cohesive Societies: Equality, Social Inclusion, and Socio-economic Participation", as well as its 14th session on "Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights of Minorities". It also follows up on the reports of the Special Rapporteurs on minority issues, notably the 2024 report to the Human Rights Council on "promoting diversity on minority issues to strengthen the universal dimension of human rights" (A/HRC/55/51) and the reports to the General Assembly of 2024 "Institutional designs promoting

minorities' effective participation towards diverse and inclusive societies" (A/79/169) and of 2015 on "Minorities and the Criminal Justice Process" (A/70/212).

B. General Objectives

11. The UN Forum on Minority Issues provides a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as thematic contributions and expertise to the work of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues. The Forum shall also identify and analyze 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 (A/HRC/6/15).

12. The 18th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues aims to:

- Examine the root causes of exclusion, discrimination, and intergroup tensions, including entrenched inequalities, social stigma, and the persistent invisibility of minority groups.
- 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.
- Analyze 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 multi-level engagement.
- 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).
- Identify and analyze challenges, opportunities, practices, and initiatives that strengthen the inclusion of minorities, in line with the principles and rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international instruments.
- 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 UN mechanisms, bodies, specialized agencies, funds and programmes.
- Deliver thematic recommendations to be reported to the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, in accordance with Human Rights Resolution 19/23.

13. The Forum examines state practices through legislation, policies and programmes, alongside civil society initiatives. It shall 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.

C. Participants

14. The UN Forum shall be open to the participation of States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and mechanisms in the field of human rights, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, academics and experts on minority issues and non-governmental organizations; the Forum shall also remain open to other non-governmental organizations whose aims and purposes are in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

D. Areas of discussion

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

- **Session 1 – Building trust and social cohesion: addressing barriers to peaceful coexistence**

Key discussion areas:

- Identifying the structural drivers of mistrust, exclusion, and conflict between minority and dominant populations or among minority groups, including inequality, discrimination and invisibility.
- 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.
- Examining the role of education, media, languages, the arts and other policies in countering stigmatization and fostering inclusive social norms.

- **Session 2 – Recognizing the full contribution of minorities to the economic, social, cultural, political and institutional fabric of our societies**

Key discussion areas:

- Exploring how societies can fairly recognize and integrate the diverse economic, social, political and cultural contributions of minorities into national, public and private, narratives and institutions.
- Highlighting ways in which minorities are strengthening civic engagement, development, advancing democratic institutions and reforms, and promoting respect for human rights.
- Emphasizing a multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach where minority communities, Governments, civil society, religious leaders, academia, businesses, and other actors, collaborate to build inclusive narratives and policies.

- **Session 3 – Amplifying minority voices in peacebuilding, accountability and transitional justice processes**

  Key discussion areas:
  - 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.
  - Identifying the contributions of minority-led initiatives in conflict resolution, dialogue, and reconciliation.
  - Identifying legal and institutional reforms that promote minority participation, representation, and protection in post-conflict and transitional contexts.

16. 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.

E. Inputs

17. The UN 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 UN Forum on Minority Issues.

F. Outcome

18. Based on the dialogue and contributions of the participants, a summary of the discussion of the Forum will be prepared by the Chairperson of the UN Forum, and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues will prepare a report on the recommendations of the UN Forum to the 61st session of the Human Rights Council in March 2026.