



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
28 December 2012

Original: English

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## Human Rights Council

Twenty-second session

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

### **Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues at its fifth session: implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: identifying positive practices and opportunities (27 and 28 November 2012)**

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## I. Introduction

1. The fifth session of the Forum on Minority Issues, held on 27 and 28 November 2012, focused on practical and concrete measures and recommendations aimed at ensuring the implementation in practice of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The Chairperson of this session was Soyata Maiga, a Member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights from Mali. The work of the Forum was guided by the Independent Expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák. The more than 400 participants included representatives of Governments, numerous representatives of minority communities from all regions of the world, treaty bodies, special procedures, United Nations specialized agencies, regional intergovernmental bodies, national human rights institutions and civil society.

2. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 19/23, the present document contains the recommendations that emanated from the fifth session of the Forum, which sought to provide concrete and tangible outcomes in the form of thematic recommendations of practical value to all stakeholders.

3. The year 2012 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. This anniversary offered an opportunity to raise awareness of the provisions of the Declaration and its principles, to examine the diverse ways in which the Declaration has been used and implemented in practice nationally, regionally and internationally, and the impact that it has had on national legislation, institutional mechanisms and their activities and programmes to advance the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

4. Previous sessions of the Forum have demonstrated that there are different approaches to the protection of the rights of minorities, which take into account historical, cultural and religious factors and political systems. During the fifth session of the Forum, all stakeholders seized this opportunity to share their views on existing practices, approaches and mechanisms that could perhaps be replicated in other countries, and also to discuss potential different and creative ways to further implement the Declaration.

5. In its preamble, the Declaration highlights the important role to be played by the United Nations in the protection of minorities, referring also to the work that has been done in this regard by various actors within the United Nations system. Reference is further made to the important role played by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in protecting minorities and in promoting their rights. The need to ensure more effective implementation of international instruments relevant to the rights of persons belonging to minorities is highlighted.

6. The recommendations contained in the present document are tailored for and addressed to the wide range of stakeholders responsible for the promotion and protection of minority rights, including Member States of the United Nations and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, together with national human rights institutions and civil society organizations, and persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities as the bearers of these rights.

7. In addition to the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the commentary thereon, the recommendations are based on other international and regional human rights standards, principles and guidelines developed by stakeholders, and on national legislation. The Declaration on Minorities is based on article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The jurisprudence and general comments of the Human Rights Committee

and other treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, have also informed the recommendations.

8. The range of issues included in the recommendations is not exhaustive. It is hoped that the recommendations will be interpreted in a constructive manner, through continued engagement, cooperation and dialogue with minority communities in the light of the obligations of States to implement human rights standards effectively in practice.

9. The recommendations are phrased in broad terms and can be implemented in countries with diverse historical, cultural and religious backgrounds. There is a great variety of country and minority situations and, consequently, different measures may be required to promote and protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities within a given State. The Forum also reiterated the fact that such measures ought to be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they achieve their required objectives. The Forum has consistently emphasized that standard solutions are generally neither possible nor desirable, and that its recommendations should therefore be used as a source of general guidance.

10. In their efforts to ensure the full implementation of the Declaration, all stakeholders are encouraged to refer to the concrete and action-oriented recommendations made at the four previous sessions of the Forum, focusing on the key thematic areas of minorities and the right to education, effective political participation, effective participation in economic life and guaranteeing the rights of minority women and girls.<sup>1</sup>

11. Representatives of minority communities, including associations, organizations, traditional leadership institutions, religious bodies, and other institutions established by minority communities themselves should be engaged in a meaningful participatory process with regard to all aspects of the implementation of the recommendations.

12. The Forum welcomes the information received from several stakeholders on the measures that have been taken to date to implement its recommendations from previous sessions. All stakeholders are encouraged to continue this involvement and sharing of information in this regard.

## **II. General considerations**

13. Information provided by States and other actors demonstrates that a national institutional framework facilitates legislative and policy development and the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of minority-related programmes. While non-discrimination measures are essential, the rights of minorities frequently require States to take special measures to address long-standing discrimination and inequality. Improving the mainstreaming of minority issues, and the representation of minorities and their effective participation in institutions such as human rights bodies and ministries working on central concerns of minorities, are components vital to improving institutional attention to the rights of minorities.

14. The preamble to the Declaration emphasizes that the constant promotion and realization of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as an integral part of the development of society as a whole and within a democratic framework based on the rule of law, contributes to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation among peoples and States. Ensuring meaningful and informed participation of minorities, and the management

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<sup>1</sup> See A/HRC/10/11/Add.1, A/HRC/13/25, A/HRC/16/46 and A/HRC/19/71.

by minorities of matters directly affecting them, are essential means to promoting stability and integration in the societies in which they live.

15. The Declaration aims to promote the realization of the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as other relevant international and regional instruments. The Declaration requires positive measures to be taken in the area of legislation, policy and programming.

16. In their efforts towards effective implementation of the Declaration, all actors should recognize and address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities, including on the basis of sex, age, gender identity and disability, and the compounded negative impact upon the enjoyment of their rights.

### **III. General recommendations**

17. All countries should reaffirm their commitment to the principles contained in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and publicize it widely.

18. Governments, national human rights institutions, minority groups, civil society organizations and regional and international human rights mechanisms should undertake initiatives to ensure that minorities are aware of their rights as enshrined in the Declaration and in other human rights standards and instruments, and collaborate to that end. All actors should take initiatives in the area of awareness-raising, including campaigns on minority rights with activities aimed at the promotion of the Declaration, as well as information on existing minority rights and equality bodies, departments or relevant agencies and their services.

19. All relevant actors should ensure to the fullest extent possible that the Declaration and the recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues are translated into all minority languages and disseminated widely. Outreach should be targeted at minority communities, including via minority media and in minority localities and languages.

20. Information on minority rights and minority communities should also be targeted at society at large by means of, for example, media campaigns on minority rights, equality and non-discrimination and resource materials on the Declaration and the history, culture, traditions and contributions to society of minority groups present in the State.

21. Special efforts should be made to tackle any challenges that increase the physical and social isolation of certain minority communities and individuals. Where necessary, culturally and linguistically appropriate means of community outreach to promote the Declaration should be used, such as theatre and dance, radio productions and television programmes promoting diversity. The distribution of leaflets with simplified versions of the Declaration, as well as other minority rights material, for example, should be considered where language or literacy barriers exist.

22. All relevant actors should collaborate to create and support mechanisms to encourage intercultural and interfaith dialogue at national, regional and international levels. The participation of young minority advocates and women should be ensured in such initiatives.

23. All measures taken with a view to implementing the Declaration and recommendations of the Forum should be, to the fullest extent possible, developed,

designed, implemented and reviewed with the full and effective participation of minorities. The conditions allowing for such collaboration and mechanisms to facilitate consultation should be put in place. The diverse views within minority groups should also be taken fully into account in this process. Initiatives such as the creation of a minority youth caucus to promote young peoples' participation at the Forum and other United Nations mechanisms are encouraged.

24. A United Nations voluntary fund for minorities should be created to enable minority representatives to participate in, assist and use the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system. The fund should provide funding for projects, including those managed by minority groups that are aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of minorities and practical implementation of the Declaration.

25. The Forum on Minority Issues should be further strengthened to increase its potential to promote implementation of the Declaration. Financial support for the Forum should be broadened to include funding from all regional groups. Consideration should be given to adding time to the current format, including with a view to addressing creative, concrete and impactful ways to disseminate and further promote implementation of its recommendations. Engagement with regional intergovernmental bodies should be strengthened including by convening a regional meeting of the Forum each year in a different region on a rotating basis.

## **IV. Recommendations**

### **A. National, regional and local governments**

26. Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Declaration and other minority rights standards. States should explicitly recognize the diversity within their respective societies, with regards to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. States should demonstrate their commitment to the promotion and protection of minority rights by ensuring that minority issues are consistently integrated into and reflected in legislation and governmental policies and practice.

27. The Declaration and other relevant international and regional minority rights standards should be incorporated into domestic law, providing a strong legal basis for the protection of minority rights. Stand-alone anti-discrimination legislation incorporating minority rights is recommended.

28. Governments should take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of minority communities, minority human rights defenders and representatives who may be at greater risk of violence. They should develop effective protection programmes where necessary, defined by law and including early-warning systems.

29. States that are in the process of reviewing or drafting new Constitutions should ensure that the drafting process is fully inclusive and includes the participation of minorities. States should include in their Constitutions the principles of minority rights equality and non-discrimination in conformity with international standards including the Declaration.

30. Governments should review and amend as appropriate any legislation, policy or practice that has a discriminatory or disproportionately negative effect on certain minority groups with a view to bring them into line with the Declaration. Such review processes should pay specific attention to anti-terrorism and other security legislation with a view to ensuring that they do not fall short of international human rights standards.

31. Governments should ensure the full implementation of minority rights and anti-discrimination legislation, including at the local levels, and that remedies are appropriate and easily accessible to everyone and adequate penalties are applied in the event of violation. Awareness-raising and training initiatives should be developed, including for public officials, judges and prosecutors.
32. States should take effective measures to protect minorities from acts or incitement to acts that physically threaten them, their existence or their identity, including through adopting legislation consistent with their obligations under international human rights law.
33. Measures to ensure access to justice for members of minority groups should be taken, such as the training of public and law enforcement officials on the rights contained in the Declaration and relevant national legislation relevant to minority rights. Training initiatives on minority rights, non-discrimination and equality, good practices and methodologies, with specific modules on sensitivity towards minority women and other sub-groups which may suffer from multiple forms of discrimination, should be considered within relevant public institutions. Public and law enforcement officials should be provided with such training.
34. Governments should consider the need for special measures, policies and programmes where appropriate, addressing entrenched situations of discrimination and exclusion experienced by persons belonging to minorities. Such measures should be taken to achieve specific goals, be time-bound and monitored to assess their impact on the situation of disadvantaged minorities and to ensure that they do not become discriminatory.
35. Governments should ensure that sufficient funding is dedicated to improving the situation of disadvantaged minority communities and that there is adequate allocation of resources to implement fully domestic and international standards on the rights of minorities. Where necessary, funds should be set aside and/or reallocated to support activities connected to the promotion and protection of minority rights.
36. Governments should conduct research in consultation with minority groups and civil society to assess the situation of minorities nationally, understand their experiences, needs and challenges, and seek their input on measures to ensure their rights. Research should assess the situation of minorities and the challenges faced in such areas as freedom and opportunities to practise their culture, religion and language, and should consider key areas of minority concern, including access to quality education, employment, health and housing, their ability to participate effectively in public life and the situation of minorities which might experience multiple forms of discrimination.
37. National statistics institutions should be mandated to collect disaggregated data relating to ethnicity, religion and language and to develop internal expertise on minority issues and methodologies relevant to the collection and analysis of such data. Data-gathering exercises should be designed and implemented in full consultation with minorities. Data collection should be conducted in an ethnically sensitive manner and on a voluntary basis, consistent with the right of minorities to self-identification, with full respect for the privacy and anonymity of the individuals concerned and in accordance with international standards of personal data protection.
38. Minority issues and the rights articulated in the Declaration should be mainstreamed throughout public and private institutions and bodies. The composition of such institutions should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are representative of the diverse minority groups present in society, while good practices aimed at increasing the representation and participation of minorities should be applied where required. Where appropriate, specialist minority-related roles and appointments should be considered; minorities should not, however, be confined to such roles.

39. Taking into account national circumstances, Governments should consider establishing, in consultation with minorities, specialized national institutions or agencies mandated to address minority issues, or dedicated departments, sections or focal points within existing institutions to promote the Declaration and national laws relevant to minorities. Such institutional attention should provide a focus for governmental activities and help in devising proactive policy and programme initiatives and targeted approaches to challenges involving minorities.

40. States should establish advisory or consultative bodies or mechanisms with the full participation of minorities in order to ensure that their issues and views are reflected in decision-making bodies. Such bodies, ideally at the national and regional or local levels, should be attributed appropriate powers and functions, political weight, and be adequately resourced and effectively consulted on issues affecting the minority population.

41. States should establish, or, where they are already in place, strengthen, independent national human rights institutions and ombudsman's offices with mandates including attention to minority issues. Their mandates should include fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue in addition to receiving complaints in relation to alleged violations of minority rights and anti-discrimination legislation.

42. Measures to improve the representation and participation of minorities in all fields of life, including targeted recruitment and training initiatives, should be taken and promoted in the public and private sectors. Minorities should be represented in oversight and regulatory bodies relating, for example, to law enforcement services.

43. Governments should develop and implement inclusive and targeted education policies that ensure access to high-quality education for all persons belonging to minorities, and the opportunity to learn and be taught in their language as required by the Declaration. Intercultural education approaches that are minority-sensitive should be adopted, with particular attention paid to reflecting the diversity within society and the contribution of minorities to society and to countering negative stereotypes and myths.

44. States should adopt constructive and proactive policies that are adequately funded to address persisting inhibiting factors such as enrolment, registration formalities and cost burdens, to facilitate the admission and retention of minority children in schools. Resources available should be sufficient to guarantee that the education of their children is a financially viable proposition for minority families.

45. Human rights education for all should be made an integral part of the national educational experience and integrate a minority rights component. Governments should collaborate with minority rights organizations in the development of materials relevant to minority rights and the minority communities living in the State, and ensure that minorities are fully reflected in and mainstreamed into school curricula. All teachers should receive anti-discrimination, gender-sensitive and intercultural training.

46. States should support and consider providing funding to minority organizations, which have a deep knowledge of the issues faced by minorities and are well placed to deal with the communities and provide specific services and information. Collaboration with such organizations should be sought in order to provide or strengthen the links among all relevant Government bodies and minorities and so that they may act as mediators or facilitators in consultations organized by the Government between minority groups and society at large.

47. States should promote equitable access for minorities to new information and communications technologies, including the Internet and online social media channels, as a vehicle for the dissemination of information and for encouraging the effective participation of minorities, including young people, in all spheres of life. Information relevant to

minorities should, wherever possible, be made available in minority languages, including through the establishment of minority media outlets.

48. States should collaborate fully with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including by implementing the recommendations issued by them and in seeking technical assistance to that end, if required. Where relevant, country reports submitted to human rights treaty bodies should contain information on the situation of minorities in the State and on measures taken to implement the Declaration and other minority rights standards.

49. In times of national economic difficulties or other grave challenges, Governments should ensure that any measures adopted, including austerity measures and other action taken to address the situation, do not disproportionately negatively affect minorities that might be more vulnerable. They should develop monitoring mechanisms to assess the impact of policy on different sectors of society including minorities.

50. States should review progress made by disadvantaged minority groups in relation to each of the Millennium Development Goals and step up their efforts towards reaching the goals for minorities by 2015. Such review processes should lead to the drafting of new strategies and budgets for development under the post-2015 framework, reflecting heightened attention to minority issues where necessary, including mechanisms for participation of minorities in decision-making on development issues that affect them. The post-2015 framework should include indicators to monitor the progress for minorities.

## **B. National human rights institutions**

51. National human rights institutions should consider establishing specific mechanisms within their secretariats to address minority issues, including for instance a department, section or focal point on minority issues. Minority rights and minority issues should be fully reflected in their activities and programmes. The institutions should develop programmes, activities and projects based on the provisions of the Declaration, such as those relating to minority participation, education, language rights, civic education and other key minority issues. A part of their websites should be devoted to minority issues and available in minority languages. They should be fully involved in drafting and reviewing legislation relevant to minority issues and in monitoring its implementation.

52. National human rights institutions should ensure that they have internal expertise on minority rights and that minorities are represented in their governing bodies and the composition of their staff, including at senior levels. Minority candidates, including women, should be targeted in recruitment activities for employment in specialist roles or sections; minorities should not, however, be confined to such specialist roles.

53. The establishment of regional or local sub-offices should be considered where appropriate by national human rights institutions, including in areas with concentrated minority communities and in localities where communities may face particular challenges, such as poverty, conflict or displacement. The offices should be provided with sufficient resources both in terms of staffing and logistics. Local offices or sub-offices should strive to develop their knowledge of local minority rights issues, monitor evolving situations, build relationships with communities and authorities and respond effectively to minority issues. They should also ensure that local minority issues and concerns are reflected in regional- or national-level decisions and policymaking, and that national policy and programmes in turn reach and benefit minorities in remote regions.

54. Complaint handling services within national human rights institutions should be made easily accessible to minorities. Information or resources to enable them to make or to pursue complaints or to seek alternative solutions outside the courts, including mediation

where possible, should also be readily available. National human rights institutions should provide legal assistance to minorities in cases related to minority issues.

55. National human rights institutions should extend their collaboration to regional and international human rights mechanisms, including the United Nations, for example by providing them with updated reports and other information on cases of violation of minority rights and the situation of minorities in their States, and by lobbying Governments to extend invitations and welcome visits by relevant bodies, such as United Nations special procedures mandate holders. They should provide alternative reports on minority issues to relevant bodies, including United Nations treaty bodies, in the context of State reporting requirements, and the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council.

56. National human rights institutions should play a central role in ensuring the provision of human rights education for all majority and minority communities in accordance with the plan of action of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, and ensure that the Declaration features in human rights education initiatives. They should mainstream a minority rights focus in the design of promotional and educational human rights material and programmes and ensure that human rights materials are available in minority languages. They should collaborate with sister institutions in their region and abroad to share knowledge and good practices in the design of such material.

57. National human rights institutions should collaborate with Government actors in such areas as the training of public and law enforcement officials, the design and implementation of equality projects, and ensuring equal access to justice for all persons belonging to minorities. They should conduct social surveys, hold consultations and workshops on minority issues, and provide targeted training to key actors, such as journalists and human rights defenders.

### **C. Civil society organizations**

58. Non-governmental and civil society organizations should promote awareness of the Declaration and review the extent to which they integrate minority issues and use the Declaration in their work. They should use the Declaration to engage Governments on issues affecting minorities in their States.

59. Non-governmental organizations should establish specific programmes to inform minorities of the rights and remedies available to them in the event of violation. They should assist minorities by providing legal counselling, advice and representation in legal proceedings to help to secure their rights at the national level.

60. Assistance should also be provided so that cases involving discrimination and other violations of minority rights may be brought to regional and international human rights mechanisms. For example, minority groups should consider providing information to the Independent Expert on minority issues, where appropriate, as well as other relevant special procedures, and consider sending reports to treaty bodies in the context of their consideration of State reports. They should also follow closely the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council, and work towards the implementation of the recommendations emanating from such bodies and processes.

61. Minorities should establish their own organizations and associations to promote minority rights and the cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities at the local and national levels. They should seek collaboration with relevant stakeholders to build their capacity, including through training on minority rights and existing standards and mechanisms, advocacy and report-writing skills, awareness-raising workshops and seminars, as well as through the establishment of mentoring programmes.

62. Civil society organizations should consider forming or supporting local advocacy groups and community-based associations to address minority problems as they arise, and form or join coalitions and networks to strengthen national, regional and international advocacy on the protection of minority rights to be used to, inter alia, share experiences on using the Declaration effectively.

63. Minority groups and their representatives should endeavour to participate in meetings of national, regional and international bodies and mechanisms relevant to minority issues, including the sessions of the Forum on Minority Issues, and engage with the Independent Expert on minority issues. In addition to raising awareness of the situation of minorities in their countries, they should use such opportunities to build partnerships with other organizations.

#### **D. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes**

64. Minority rights should be mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system. All United Nations human rights bodies should address minority issues specifically and systematically within their respective mandates. In accordance with their fields of responsibility, they should consider adopting a specific policy on minority issues. They should develop internal expertise on minority rights, including by appointing a specialist to focus on minority issues, by ensuring that minorities are represented on their staff and that all staff members receive training on minority issues.

65. United Nations training initiatives should incorporate issues concerning national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Minority rights should be included in human rights training material and other educational tools and resources that are produced.

66. United Nations departments, agencies, programmes and funds that are part of the newly established United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), are urged to participate actively in the work of the network. Relevant United Nations entities not yet members of the network are encouraged to appoint focal points for racial discrimination and the protection of minorities. The Network should actively engage, where appropriate, with representatives of minority communities and other relevant expert stakeholders as well as established human rights mechanisms focusing on minority rights.

67. The United Nations should consider proclaiming an international day for minority rights, to celebrate diversity within all societies and the rich culture and traditions of the minority groups present in each State. While promoting intercultural dialogue between the various groups in a country, such a day could also be used to raise awareness of the Declaration and to highlight the different approaches that can be taken to ensure its practical implementation. States should be encouraged to mark this day nationally and to conduct activities to raise awareness of national minority communities, issues and the Declaration.

68. Individual mandate holders and working groups of the Human Rights Council and special representatives of the Secretary-General should continue, where appropriate and in accordance with their mandates, to examine the situation of minorities, and to help to raise awareness of the Declaration and use it in their work. During country visits, they should ensure that they meet with minority representatives, including with those minority groups who might be most marginalized and living in remote areas.

69. Treaty bodies should require States to provide information in their periodic reports on the situation of minorities and on existing policies and programmes of the State to ensure the full enjoyment of their rights. Treaty bodies should consider making general

comments or recommendations relevant to minority rights and based upon the Declaration to strengthen their attention to minority issues and to provide guidance to States in the context of their reporting requirements.

70. Development agencies should ensure the full and effective participation of minorities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes or projects affecting minorities or the regions in which they live. They should ensure the active participation of persons belonging to the different minority groups in civil society consultations relating to development processes. To that end, they may consider making information on their activities accessible to minorities by means of proactive outreach to minority groups, communities and minority media outlets, holding meetings in regions where minorities predominantly live, offering language translation services and facilitating their attendance at such gatherings.

71. United Nations agencies and programmes should support governments in evaluating the impact of the Millennium Development Goals policies on minorities so far. They should offer technical assistance to States in their efforts to increase attention to minority rights standards in the context of the Goals and in the design of new strategies under the post-2015 frameworks.

72. Projects on technical cooperation and assistance should be based on the standards contained in the Declaration. They should benefit from resources including *Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation*<sup>2</sup> developed by OHCHR, and *Marginalised Minorities in Development Programming: A Resource Guide and Toolkit*, published by the United Nations Development Programme.<sup>3</sup>

73. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should:

- Sponsor training workshops to support the implementation of the Declaration, and the recommendations made by the Forum on Minority Issues;
- Encourage States to develop and/or enhance minority youth training initiatives, such as minority fellowships and internships in national, regional and international Government agencies, such as those of the United Nations;
- Continue to explore new opportunities to further promote the Declaration and the work of the different mechanisms relevant to minority rights, including through the use of social media as a means to improve outreach to a wider audience.

74. Within the context of the universal periodic review, all stakeholders, including Member States, non-governmental organizations and OHCHR, should provide specific information relating to the situation of minorities in States under review, and make recommendations aimed at guaranteeing the implementation of the Declaration.

75. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies with presences at the country level should support national and local institutional mechanisms aimed at strengthening the promotion and protection of minority rights.

## **E. Regional intergovernmental bodies**

76. Regional intergovernmental bodies should promote greater attention to minority issues within their respective regions, including by actively raising awareness of and promoting the Declaration in their work and encouraging its implementation at the national

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<sup>2</sup> Available from [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights_en.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Available from [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/UNDPMarginalisedMinorities.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/UNDPMarginalisedMinorities.pdf).

level. The Declaration should be used to help to shape and strengthen regional human rights standards, support legal cases relating to minority issues in regional courts and monitoring bodies, and in efforts to monitor the minority rights performance of States. The inclusion of firm minority rights provisions in regional standards would help to promote and enhance the attention paid to minority rights at the regional and national levels.

77. Regional human rights mechanisms should assess the extent to which minority issues feature in their work and address any shortfalls identified by mainstreaming minority issues into their activities and programmes. In their efforts to pay greater attention to minority issues, they should consider the creation of thematic and/or special mechanisms, such as a regional Working Group on minorities, a Commissioner for minorities or other relevant alternatives.

78. Regional human rights mechanisms should consider actively participating in every session of the Forum on Minority Issues to report on their activities aimed at the practical implementation of the Declaration and other minority rights standards in their respective regions/systems.

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