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UN Forum on Minority Issues

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Session VII : Concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build the capacity of minorities to participate effectively.

Intervention by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Since this session is about concrete steps, and since there seems to be wide agreement about the importance of data collection and about the need to sensitize mainstream political actors and institutions, for example political parties which are often gatekeepers, and in some cases, obstacles to effective political participation, I would like to make a couple of suggestions for adding to the excellent draft recommendations. We will also submit these in writing to the Independent Expert.

In paragraph 22, I would propose to add a request for political parties to publish annual reports on their progress towards increasing the level of minority participation in their ranks and reflecting diversity in their work.

By the same token, I suggest to encourage parliaments to monitor their progress towards greater inclusiveness and more effective participation of minorities in their work. Indeed, the IPU would welcome an invitation in the Recommendations to continue to mobilize the parliamentary community in support of this goal. This would contribute to the implementation of Resolution 63/24 of the United Nations General Assembly, which encourages the IPU to strengthen its contribution to the Human Rights Council.

We naturally support paragraph 35, which calls for an international meeting of parliamentary committees to discuss the participation of minorities in political decision-making, and believe that the annual meeting that IPU convenes of Chairs of parliamentary human rights committees could be an ideal forum for this event.

It would also be useful to encourage parliaments to use the recommendations of the Forum in their oversight work, in particular to hold the government to account for the implementation of their treaty obligations, and during the preparation of national reports to the international treaty mechanisms.

Finally, I would like to suggest that a data clearinghouse on the political participation of minorities be set up. I suspect that much of the data we are looking for already exists within national, regional and international organizations, and the Office of the High Commissioner, for example, may be well placed to compile and make this data more widely available. We would naturally be happy to contribute to such an enterprise.

Thank you.