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**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REPORTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**The rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic,
religious and linguistic minorities**

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Human Rights Council, in its decision 2/102, requested the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue with the fulfilment of their activities, in accordance with all previous decisions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, and to update the relevant reports and studies. Accordingly, the report of the Secretary-General on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (A/HRC/4/109) was submitted to the Council at its fourth session. At the ninth session, an interim report on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (A/HRC/9/8) was submitted, in which some of the main interventions undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to strengthen the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities since the previous report were outlined. They included efforts to promote dialogue and mutual understanding on thematic issues, to support capacity-building of OHCHR staff, public officials from Member States and civil society, and to strengthen inter-agency cooperation.

2. The present report, the final report supplementing the interim report, contains a review of relevant developments arising out of the work of the treaty bodies and special procedures and information on OHCHR activities in the field in 2007 and 2008 and at headquarters since the submission of the interim report. The addendum to the present report (A/HRC/10/38/Add.1) is a summary report of the expert meeting on integration with diversity in policing, held on 15 and 16 January 2008, mentioned briefly in the interim report.

3. On the basis of General Assembly resolution 56/162 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/50, human rights treaty bodies and special procedures (thematic and to a lesser extent country mandates) continue to monitor situations and rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Some examples of such focus are given below. They do not include the work of the independent expert on minorities, who will submit a separate report.

II. TREATY BODIES

Human Rights Committee

4. At its ninety-second session, held from 17 March to 7 April 2008, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern at the persisting problems faced by minorities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, such as police violence, lack of language support in judicial proceedings, inadequacy of educational opportunities and lack of a protective and non-discriminatory learning environment (CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2).

5. At its ninety-third session, held from 7 to 25 July 2008, in its concluding observations, the Committee regretted that the report submitted by France lacked sufficient empirical information on issues such as the political participation of members of ethnic minorities, and suggested that the State review its position concerning the formal recognition of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, and reinforce its legislative framework and institutional mechanisms to exclude all discriminatory practices that prevent equal access to employment for persons belonging to ethnic, national or religious minorities (CCPR/C/FRA/CO/4). The Committee also recommended

that Ireland recognize Travellers as an ethnic minority group (CCPR/C/IRL/CO/3) and that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland increase the representation of women and ethnic minorities in the judiciary (CCPR/C/GBR/CO/6).

6. At its ninety-fourth session, held from 13 to 31 October 2008, in its concluding observations on the report of Denmark (CCPR/C/DNK/CO/5), the Committee recommended that the State party should pay particular attention to the self-identification of the individuals concerned in the determination of their status as persons belonging to minorities or indigenous peoples. The Committee recommended that the State translate and disseminate the concluding observations in minority languages spoken in Denmark, including Faroese. With regard to the report submitted by Japan, the Committee requested that the State party's fifth periodic report and the present concluding observations be published and widely disseminated, to the extent possible, in national minority languages (CCPR/C/JPN/CO/5).

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

7. At its thirty-eighth session, held from 30 April to 18 May 2007, in its concluding observations to the State report on Latvia (E/C.12/LVA/CO/1), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with approval the efforts made by the State party to increase educational opportunities for Romani children, including the National Programme on Roma in Latvia (2007-2009), which includes specific measures on education and integration. At the same time, it expressed concerns that the State Language Law, which mandates the use of Latvian in all dealings with public institutions, including administrative districts, may be discriminatory in effect against linguistic minorities living in the State, including the Russian-speaking minority, which constitutes a significant proportion of the population and, in particular, members of linguistic minorities, especially older persons, may be disadvantaged in their claims to public authorities with regard to their entitlement to public services, which has a negative impact on their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. It recommended that the State party take measures to increase school attendance by Romani children, provide adequate support to members of linguistic minorities, take temporary special measures to ensure that minority women have the same access to the regular labour market and remuneration as men, and provide vocational training in minority languages.

8. At its fortieth session, held from 28 April to 16 May 2008, in its concluding observations to the State report on India (E/C.12/IND/CO/5), the Committee expressed concern about the negative effect of cultural stereotypes and personal laws of minority groups on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by minority women.

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

9. At its seventy-second session, held from 18 February to 7 March 2008, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination requested updated data on education, poverty and unemployment for ethnic groups and minorities from Belgium (CERD/C/BEL/CO/15) and Fiji (CERD/C/FJI/CO/17). In its concluding observations to the report of the Republic of Moldova (CERD/C/MDA/CO/7), the Committee, while commending the inclusion of a chapter on the rights of national minorities in the national human rights plan of action for the period 2004-2008, highlighted several shortcomings, including the lack of disaggregated statistical information, the need to represent more effectively the interests of national minorities and to guarantee equitable

access to all ethnic and religious minorities. The Committee also discussed the situation of Roma in Italy (CERD/C/ITA/CO/15) and Latinos and African Americans in the United States of America (CERD/C/USA/CO/6) in relation to police brutality, violence, abuse, Medicare and issues related to sexual and reproductive health.

10. At its seventy-third session, held from 28 July to 15 August 2008, in its concluding observations to the report of Ecuador (CERD/C/ECU/CO/18), while it took note of a ministerial decision guaranteeing the Romani people the right to free association for peaceful purposes, the Committee expressed concern at the constitutional failure to grant legal recognition to the Romani people as an ethnic minority. While noting with appreciation that the Travellers and Yenish have been recognized by Switzerland as a national cultural minority, the Committee remained concerned that Travellers and Roma are still subjected to numerous disadvantages and forms of discrimination, and noted with regret the lack of substantial progress made by Switzerland in combating racist and xenophobic attitudes towards minorities (CERD/C/CHE/CO/6). It noted with appreciation the efforts by Sweden (CERD/C/SWE/CO/18) to promote the rights of the Romani minority and recommended that it strengthen its efforts to increase the level of education of members of Romani communities by raising awareness about the possibility for Romani children to receive instruction in their mother tongue. The Committee welcomed the creation of the German Secretariat for Minorities and the enactment of the law on promotion of the Friesian language in public life, adopted in 2004. However, while noting that the State party recognized German Roma and Sinti as national minorities, the Committee expressed concern that many Roma and Sinti continue to experience discrimination in the fields of education, employment and housing (CERD/C/DEU/CO/18).

11. The Committee also expressed concern about the distinction made between autochthonous minorities and other minority groups in Austria, inter alia, the Slovene minority in Carinthia and the Romani and Croat minorities in Burgenland, and individuals who do not reside in those areas. The Committee further expressed concerns about the frequent denial of access to places intended for use by the general public to persons of African and Latin American origin and to Roma (CERD/C/AUT/CO/17). It encouraged Namibia to revise its electoral laws with a view to broadening their appeal to ethnic minorities and to include a minimum proportion of candidates from these groups. The Committee also expressed concerns about the high incidence of rape of San women by members of other communities, which seems to be caused by negative stereotypes (CERD/C/NAM/CO/12).

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

12. At its fortieth session, held from 14 January to 1 February 2008, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women pointed out that the State report by Saudi Arabia did not provide information regarding women belonging to ethnic, religious or other minorities (CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/2). It also urged the Government of Sweden to take effective measures to eliminate discrimination against immigrants, refugees and minority women (CEDAW/C/SWE/CO/7).

13. At its forty-first session, held from 30 June to 18 July 2008, in its concluding observations to the report of Finland (CEDAW/C/FIN/CO/6), the Committee noted the lack of statistics on the participation of minority women in political and public life and in academia, and encouraged Finland to be proactive in its measures to prevent discrimination against Romani women. While

noting various measures taken by the State party, including the Programme for Roma Integration into Lithuanian society (2000-2004 and 2008-2010) and the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013, the Committee urged Lithuania to intensify its efforts to eliminate discrimination against vulnerable groups of women, including those belonging to ethnic minorities such as the Roma (CEDAW/C/LTV/CO/4). It also acknowledged the measures taken by Slovakia under the Decade of Romani Inclusion 2005-2015, but expressed its concern that Romani women and girls remained vulnerable and marginalized, and urged Slovakia to take effective measures to eliminate the multiple forms of discrimination against Romani women and girls. The Committee was also concerned at information received with regard to Romani women reporting to have been sterilized without prior and informed consent, and recommended that Slovakia take all necessary measures to ensure that the complaints are duly acknowledged and that victims are granted effective remedies (CEDAW/C/SVK/CO/4). With regard to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Committee noted that ethnic and minority women were underrepresented in all areas of the labour market, particularly in senior and decision-making positions (CEDAW/C/UK/CO/6).

Committee on the Rights of the Child

14. At its forty-eighth session, held from 19 May to 6 June 2008, in its concluding observations to the report of Bulgaria (CRC/C/BGR/CO/2), the Committee on the Rights of the Child, while commending efforts made, such as the National Action Plan on the Decade of Roma Inclusion and Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons from the Ethnic Minorities, highlighted several shortcomings, including the particularly limited and inequitable access to adequate health-care services for Romani children, the relatively high infant mortality rate and the common practice of segregating Romani patients in hospital facilities. The recommendations of the Committee also covered areas such as promoting tolerance, addressing negative attitudes, removing discrimination and working actively with Romani communities for the full enjoyment of their rights. It requested the Government of Eritrea to provide, in its next report, information on the fulfilment of the rights of children belonging to minority groups, and recommended that the issue of access to health care for children of minority groups be prioritized. It also expressed concern at the lack of adequate institutional structures to ensure birth registration of all children, especially minorities (CRC/C/ERI/CO/3). Furthermore, the Committee discussed and made recommendations on the situation of children of minority groups in relation to adoption and education opportunities in Georgia (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3) and Serbia (CRC/C/SRB/CO/1).

15. Under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, in relation to the report of the United States of America, the Committee expressed concern over cases of recruitment into the armed forces through campaigns targeted at children belonging to ethnic and racial minorities and other vulnerable socio-economic groups (CRC/C/OPAC/USA/CO/1).

16. At its forty-ninth session, held from 15 September to 3 October 2008, in its concluding observations to the report of Bhutan (CRC/C/BTN/CO/2), the Committee expressed concern about the ability of children belonging to minority groups, in particular of Nepalese ethnic origin, to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion and use their own language, and recommended that the State party recognize these rights. In relation to the report submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Committee noted various measures taken by the State party, including plans to consolidate and strengthen equality

legislation, with clear opportunities to mainstream children's rights to non-discrimination into the anti-discrimination law (Equality Bill). However, it expressed concerns that, in practice, certain groups of children belonging to minority groups, such as the Roma, Irish Travellers and others, continue to experience discrimination and social stigmatization. The Committee therefore recommended that the State party ensure full protection against discrimination on any grounds by strengthening its awareness-raising and other preventive activities against discrimination and, if necessary, take affirmative action for the benefit of these vulnerable groups of children. It also expressed concern at the increased number of children in alternative care and, in particular, the high percentage of children of African descent and children from ethnic minorities. The Committee was similarly concerned that children of African descent and children of ethnic minorities sometimes face long waiting periods for adoption by a family of the same ethnic origin (CRC/C/GBR/CO/4).

17. Under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, in its concluding observations for the United Republic of Tanzania (CRC/C/OPSC/TZA/CO/1) and Uganda (CRC/C/OPSC/UGA/CO/1), the Committee expressed its concern about the lack of statistical data disaggregated by age, sex, minority group, socio-economic background and geographic location. The Committee, in its concluding observations on the report submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/GBR/CO/1), mentioned the State party's active policy of recruitment of children into the armed forces, and recommended that the State ensure that this recruitment is not conducted in a manner which specifically targets ethnic minorities and children of low-income families.

Committee against Torture

18. At its thirty-eighth session, held from 30 April to 18 May 2007, in its concluding observations to the report by Poland (CAT/C/POL/CO/4), the Committee against Torture noted with approval some positive legislative developments, such as the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and on Regional Languages of January 2005, but also noted that it had received reports of intolerance and hatred towards minorities, while the State party was unable to supply statistics on racially motivated crimes, particularly violence against the Roma. The Committee recommended that the State party continue to be vigilant in ensuring that the relevant existing legal and administrative measures are strictly observed and that training curricula and administrative directives constantly convey to staff the message that incitation to hatred and violence will not be tolerated and will be sanctioned accordingly.

19. In its concluding observations to the report by Ukraine (CAT/C/UKR/CO/5), the Committee urged the State party to ensure prompt, impartial and effective investigations into incitement and acts of violence against persons belonging to ethnic and national minorities, including acts against Roma, anti-Semitic attacks and violence against persons of African and Asian origin and non-citizens; to prosecute and punish perpetrators with penalties appropriate to the nature of their acts; to publicly condemn hate crimes and related violent acts; to work to eradicate incitement and any role public officials or law enforcement personnel might have in

such violence; to give prompt consideration to expanding recruitment into law enforcement of persons belonging to ethnic and national minorities; and to develop and adopt a comprehensive governmental programme addressing the human rights situation of national minorities, especially the Roma.

Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

20. In its annual report to the Committee against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT/C/40/2), the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment adopted preliminary guidelines for the development of national preventive mechanisms, to be established or designated by each State party within a year of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture or of its ratification or accession. The guidelines specifically provide that the membership of the national preventive mechanism should be gender balanced and have adequate representation of ethnic, minority and indigenous groups. This specific provision was formulated as a recommendation in a report of the Subcommittee on its visit to Sweden (CAT/OP/SWE/1).

Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

21. A number of State reports clearly indicated that certain migrants facing discrimination belong to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. For example, in its concluding observations in 2007 and 2008, the Committee recommended that Egypt (CMW/C/EGY/CO/1) and the Syrian Arab Republic (CMW/C/SYR/CO/1) provide adequate training to all judicial personnel and law enforcement officials on respect for human rights and non-discrimination on ethnic or racial grounds.

22. While the work of the treaty bodies clearly shows that significant attention is increasingly paid to situations and the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, it is also evident that most information is available for countries in Europe. There is thus a need to mainstream the consideration of situations and rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in other regions.

III. SPECIAL PROCEDURES

Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

23. In her report (A/HRC/6/5), the Special Rapporteur referred to the vulnerable situation of religious minorities in various reports, stating, for example, that the practice of her mandate shows that national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities are in a particularly vulnerable situation and are often subject to multiple discrimination based on the various aspects of their identity, for example racial and religious. The Special Rapporteur also raised the point that some religious minorities are adversely affected by manifestations of rejection or violence by non-State actors, and recalled that the State remains responsible even when abuses are

committed against minorities by non-State actors. She also pointed out that religious minorities face various forms of discrimination and intolerance from policies, legislation and State practice. Issues of concern relate to obstacles in official registration procedures and inappropriate limitations when disseminating materials and displaying religious symbols.

24. In an earlier report (A/HRC/4/21), the Special Rapporteur also specifically addressed issues facing religious minorities and new religious movements and cautioned that, when religious minorities are considered so-called non-traditional or new religious movements, the members of these communities may often be the object of suspicion and suffer greater limitations to their right to freedom of religion or belief. The Special Rapporteur advocated interpreting the scope of application for freedom of religion or belief in a broad sense, with the contents of a religion being defined by the worshippers themselves. She thus found it particularly worrying when a religious community is empowered, either de jure or de facto, to decide whether or not to veto the registration of another religious or belief group.

25. In her report on her visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (A/HRC/7/10/Add.3), the Special Rapporteur shared her concern that Catholic staff were underrepresented in the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the prison service and other criminal justice agencies, and welcomed affirmative strategies to ensure that these agencies could recruit a more representative workforce. She emphasized that tackling the sectarian polarization in Northern Ireland should not lead to a disregard for the situation and concerns of religious minorities, including physical attacks against them. She expressed concerns about reports of profiling of Muslims based on physical appearance within the framework of counter-terrorism efforts and the resulting alienation of certain ethnic and religious groups, and encouraged the introduction of legislation against racial and religious hatred in Scotland.

26. In the report on her visit to Tajikistan (A/HRC/7/10/Add.2), the Special Rapporteur urged the Government to actively protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief of both the Muslim communities and the various religious minorities in Tajikistan and to bear that in mind, especially when adopting specific legislations and policies. In the report on her visit to Maldives (A/HRC/4/21/Add.3), she expressed concern about reports that individuals who were suspected of having converted from Islam had been subjected to coercion in detention to persuade them to reaffirm their belief in Islam; about legislation limiting eligibility for certain public posts and voting rights to Muslims only; and about the citizenship law which stipulates that only Muslims can apply for citizenship. She encouraged the Government to consider amending the current practice to enable non-Muslims to manifest their religion or belief in a manner consistent with human rights law.

Special Rapporteur on the right to education

27. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education pointed out in his thematic report on the right to education in emergency situations (A/HRC/8/19) that, in times of emergency, inequality and discrimination increase for marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities. In the report on his visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Special Rapporteur welcomed an action plan on the education needs of Romani and other national minorities, the goals of which are the removal of financial and administrative barriers to Romani school enrolment and completion, the participation of Romani parents and communities in the education process, increasing Romani teaching staff and sensitizing non-Romani teaching staff to the needs of Romani students.

However, he also expressed his concern that these measures may remain on paper, owing to various barriers to access to education for a large number of Romani children because of the absence of identity documents. The Special Rapporteur called upon federal, entity and cantonal authorities to offer all children, regardless of their ethnic origin, an acceptable and adaptable education, respecting all cultural specificities. The Special Rapporteur also encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement expeditiously the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding discrimination suffered by minority children in Bosnia and Herzegovina (A/HRC/8/10/Add.4). The Special Rapporteur also sent communications on minority issues to the Russian Federation, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Nigeria and received replies from the Russian Federation and Slovenia (A/HRC/4/29/Add.1, A/HRC/8/10/Add.1).

Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

28. The Special Rapporteur regularly pays attention to minority issues in his country reports; for example, in the report on his visit to Mauritania (A/HRC/7/19/Add.6), he called attention to the negative effects, such as socio-economic marginalization, of continuing discriminatory practices of an ethnic and racial nature such as slavery, the caste system and the use of ethnicity as a political tool, and recommended that the Government establish an independent commission with the democratic participation of all political movements, affected communities, traditional religious and spiritual leaders and civil society actors to tackle these issues. In the report on his visit to the Dominican Republic (A/HRC/7/19/Add.5), he drew attention to persistent structural and systemic racism and discrimination against Dominicans of African origin, resulting in their failure to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights and in poverty, marginalization and exclusion.

Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context

29. The Special Rapporteur has addressed housing issues of minority communities in several of his country mission reports. For example, in the report on his mission to Spain (A/HRC/7/16/Add.2), he urged all levels of the Government to address urgently the lack of housing and social services for, inter alia, the Romani communities, which is a result of the primacy of the discriminatory home ownership policy model.

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

30. In the mission report to Serbia, including Kosovo (A/HRC/7/28/Add.3), the Special Rapporteur recommended that the process of consultation with civil society and human rights defenders, including from Romani, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, should be institutionalized and systematized in order to ensure their active participation in legislative and policy decision-making.

Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons

31. In the report on his mission to Colombia (A/HRC/4/38/Add.3), the Representative of the Secretary-General recommended the implementation of a comprehensive policy for differentiated assistance to Afro-Colombian communities and individuals that takes into account their respective cultural traditions, leadership structures and collective character. He also recommended the creation of channels and mechanisms to engage these communities in consultations and have them participate in determining solutions and assistance. Regarding collective land titles of communities, he recommended that the authorities declare invalid the titles issued for parts of the collective land sold by individuals from collective property.

Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

32. In the report on her mission to Sweden (A/HRC/4/34/Add.3), the Special Rapporteur recommended that the Government strengthen efforts to protect persons belonging to ethnic or religious minorities from discrimination in the labour market, the justice sector and other key areas, and consider adopting special measures to facilitate equal participation of women and men with minority backgrounds in the educational system and the labour market.

Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

33. In the report on his missions to Togo and Indonesia (A/HRC/7/3/Add.5 and Add.7), the Special Rapporteur urged the Government to ensure that the criminal justice system is non-discriminatory at every stage and that corruption, which disproportionately affects minorities, among others, is fought.

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

34. In his reports (A/HRC/4/14 and A/HRC/7/18), the Special Rapporteur emphasized that decisions on humanitarian assistance must be guided solely by the best interest of, among others, minority groups, and called on the Government to take urgent measures to eliminate discriminatory practices against ethnic groups and to ensure that no further discrimination is carried out. He also appealed to the Government to put an end to the harassment and persecution of representatives of ethnic groups.

IV. WORK OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE FIELD AND AT HEADQUARTERS

35. OHCHR has increasingly been operationalizing its work. The Office now has some 50 field presences and its country engagement increasingly includes activities to advance the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Such activities contribute to promoting the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, for example, the rights to participate fully in public life, to be treated equally, to practice one's own religion and speak one's own language, through strengthening dialogue between minorities and Governments; building the capacity of persons belonging to minorities to protect their own rights; stimulating national human rights institutions to enhance their work on

minority issues; enhancing inter-agency cooperation to promote the rights of minorities; reducing poverty and exclusion of minorities, for example, by contributing to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and of economic, social and cultural rights; and preventing human rights violations. Some examples of good practices and OHCHR work in the field on minority issues are given below.

36. In 2006, the OHCHR country office in Nepal launched a three-month social inclusion project to map out, and thereby gain an understanding of, the issues facing indigenous peoples and minorities in Nepal. This mapping exercise resulted in a clearer understanding of the kind of intervention OHCHR could undertake for the protection and promotion of the human rights of indigenous peoples and minorities in Nepal. On the basis of conclusions of the project, the Office carried out a number of activities, especially capacity-building and awareness-raising workshops, in cooperation with various local organizations working on indigenous peoples and minority rights and issues. For instance, it organized a workshop with Dalits in the Far West Region to raise their awareness and strengthen their networks. On the basis of interaction with several Dalit organizations and suggestions put forward by them, in November 2008 OHCHR produced a cartoon series on filing a first information report. The objective of the cartoon series was to raise awareness among grass-roots organizations, especially members of Dalits and marginalized communities, about their right to access justice. It served as a tool to enhance their access to the formal justice system. OHCHR observed that its efforts to support and encourage minorities to enjoy and realize their human rights resulted in an increased level of awareness among minorities and an increased willingness on the part of the State to respect and protect the human rights of these communities. For instance, the Government and its agencies have started introducing programmes to facilitate the participation of persons belonging to minorities in public affairs.

37. The OHCHR human rights adviser in Ecuador participated in a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) programme on development and cultural diversity to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion, to promote the revitalization of culture, inclusion and intercultural dialogue in order to bridge the gap of discrimination and social exclusion affecting minorities and disadvantaged groups. The programme contributes to achieving Millennium Development Goals 1, 2, 5 and 7. Its objectives include strengthening intercultural public policy; support for revitalization initiatives in culture and for income-generating activities; and capacity-building for statistical analysis and information on cultural and ethnic diversity. The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé assisted in the preparation of a study on a possible draft law on marginalized peoples, commissioned by the Government of Cameroon.

38. At the headquarters level, in the period since the submission of the interim report, OHCHR continued to concentrate activities on capacity-building of various actors, such as civil society and OHCHR staff, and on the mainstreaming of minority rights in the work of the United Nations through inter-agency cooperation. The Arabic-speaking component of the minority fellowship programme was held from 1 to 19 December 2008, with the participation of representatives of the following ethnic and religious communities: the Kurd Failiya from Iraq, the Haratin from Mauritania, the Shia Jaafari from Saudi Arabia, the Kurds from the Syrian Arab Republic and the Zaghawa from the Sudan.

39. From 26 to 28 November 2008, OHCHR also held a training workshop in Addis Ababa on the promotion and protection of the human rights of minorities and indigenous peoples for OHCHR staff in Africa. A total of 21 staff members from 14 field presences participated in the workshop. In November 2008, OHCHR published an information note on minorities online, entitled “Towards developing country engagement strategies on minorities”, to assist OHCHR staff, United Nations partners and other practitioners.¹ The note answers commonly-asked questions about minorities and identifies elements that should be included in strategies to address the situation of minorities in United Nations country programmes. The note is now being tested by OHCHR staff and other practitioners in the field with a view to finalizing a publication at the end of 2009.

40. OHCHR also organized the fifth consultation of the Inter-Agency Group on Minority Issues on 15 October 2008 in Geneva, with the participation of representatives of OHCHR, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the independent expert on minority issues. The agenda items discussed included the information note on minorities: launch, dissemination and further steps; OHCHR minority fellowships and inter-agency cooperation; recent developments at the Human Rights Council, particularly the universal periodic review and its consideration of minority issues during the first cycle and discussion of inter-agency cooperation for future review cycle and in follow-up processes; the UNDP/Inter-Parliamentary Union project entitled “Promoting inclusive parliaments: the representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in Parliament”; and the inaugural session of the Forum on Minority Issues.

41. In terms of bilateral inter-agency cooperation, OHCHR has been conducting a joint initiative with UNDP and the independent expert on minority issues on developing a UNDP resource guide on minorities in development, which was validated through a consultation held on 2 and 3 December 2008 in New York.

III. CONCLUSIONS

42. **The Council is invited to consider whether it should request that future annual reports submitted to the Council provide information on OHCHR activities related to minorities, both at headquarters and in the field, and a review of relevant developments arising out of the work of the treaty bodies and special procedures. The Council might also consider whether it would be more appropriate for further reports to be submitted by the High Commissioner instead of the Secretary-General. Lastly, the Council might want to consider grouping all reports on minorities, including that of the independent expert on minority issues, the Forum on Minority Issues and the High Commissioner at one time of the year in order to facilitate governmental delegations and permit greater participation by minority organizations in the work of the Council on this issue, if they so wish.**

¹ Available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Strategies_on_minoritiesEN.pdf and www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Strategies_on_minoritiesEN.pdf.