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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
Forum on Minority Issues  
Second session  
Geneva, 12-13 November 2009

**Provisional agenda and annotations thereto**

**Note by the Secretariat\***

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
2. International and regional human rights frameworks and core principles on the right of minorities to effective political participation
3. Obstacles to effective political participation faced by minorities
4. Conditions required for effective political participation
5. National practices and real experiences: existing mechanisms providing for the political participation of minorities
6. Impact of electoral systems and the role of political parties
7. Concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build the capacity of minorities to participate effectively
8. Concluding remarks

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\* Late submission.

## **1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

### **Venue**

1. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 6/15, the second session of the Forum on Minority Issues will be held in Geneva on 12 and 13 November 2009.
2. The Forum will have before it the provisional agenda contained in the present document to consider for adoption. A tentative schedule of work for the session is contained in annex I.

### **Opening meeting**

3. The Forum may wish to consider the following scenario with regard to the structure of the opening meeting. The President of the Human Rights Council would open the session and make a statement. Statements would then be made by the independent expert on minority issues, the Chairperson of the Forum on Minority Issues and the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### **Documentation**

4. A list of documents for the session is provided in annex II. In addition to normal distribution, official documents for the session will be made available on the Human Rights Council website at the address [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/forum.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/forum.htm).

## **2. International and regional human rights frameworks and core principles on the right of minorities to effective political participation**

5. At the sessions, participants will have an opportunity to make brief presentations and comments based on the background document and draft recommendations that they will have before them. After the presentations, there will be an open discussion to which all participants will be invited to contribute. This short session will provide participants with a brief overview of existing international and regional standards and principles with a view to set the framework for ensuing discussions.

### **3. Obstacles to effective political participation faced by minorities**

6. Issues for presentation and discussion could include the barriers that minority populations face in their aspirations for civic participation, including discriminatory biases within the larger society; the impact of racist and xenophobic political platforms; language requirements to register to vote or hold public offices; the inaccessibility of polling places to minority communities; the particular constraints on the participation of women; and limited availability of civic and voter education in minority languages.

### **4. Conditions required for effective political participation**

7. Issues for presentation and discussion could focus on the human rights and freedoms that are critical enablers of broad political participation and democratic societies, in particular, the right to non-discrimination; freedom of expression; freedom of the press and minority access to the media; equality with regard to economic and social rights; freedom of assembly and association; freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties or other organizations; freedom to debate public affairs and to hold peaceful public meetings; and participatory and transparent law-making processes.

### **5. National practices and real experiences: existing mechanisms providing for the political participation of minorities**

8. The session will focus on current national practices that have been developed to foster minority political participation and the impact of those policies. Governments will be invited to describe their national policies and minority political actors to discuss the role that minority policymakers should play in formulating and implementing laws and policies to support and promote equal rights and opportunities in the public sector.

9. Issues for presentation and discussion could include the definition of meaningful representation and empowerment, as well as ways to ensure an effective role by minorities in policy and decision-making. The discussion could look further at how effective minority consultative bodies have been in giving meaningful representation to minorities, the experience with quotas, reserved seats or other such mechanisms to ensure representation of minorities and whether systems of cultural autonomy and minority self-governance developed to protect rights

to language, education, religion and cultural identity have indeed provided minorities with meaningful participation in governance.

#### **6. Impact of electoral systems and the role of political parties**

10. Issues for presentation and discussion could focus on differing electoral systems and the policies and practices of political parties that either impede or promote the successful inclusion of minorities in mainstream electoral policies.

#### **7. Concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build the capacity of minorities to participate effectively**

11. Issues for presentation and discussion could focus on the draft recommendations that participants will have before them. The objective would be to formulate practical, concrete policies, actions or programmes that would generate a higher level of minority political participation at the national, regional and local levels.

#### **8. Concluding remarks**

12. The Chairperson of the Forum and the independent expert on minority issues will share with Forum participants their concluding remarks, including forward-looking proposals for next steps.

**Annex I**

**Schedule of work**

Thursday, 12 November 2009	
10 a.m.-1 p.m.	3-6 p.m.
<p>Welcoming and opening remarks by the President of the Human Rights Council</p> <p>Remarks by the independent expert on minority issues</p> <p>Remarks by the Chairperson of the Forum on Minority Issues</p> <p>Remarks by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights</p> <p>International and regional human rights frameworks and core principles</p> <p>Obstacles to effective political participation faced by minorities</p>	<p>Conditions required for effective political participation</p> <p>National practices and real experiences: existing mechanisms providing for the political participation of minorities</p>
Friday, 13 November 2009	
10 a.m.-1 p.m.	3-6 p.m.
<p>Continuation of session on national practices and real experiences</p> <p>Impact of electoral systems and the role of political parties</p>	<p>Concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build the capacity of minorities to participate effectively</p> <p>Concluding remarks on next steps</p>

## **Annex II**

### **Documents before the Forum on Minority Issues at its second session**

Symbol	Title
A/HRC/FMI/2009/1	Provisional agenda and annotations thereto; note by the Secretariat
A/HRC/FMI/2009/2	Concept note on minorities and effective political participation
A/HRC/FMI/2009/3	Background document on minorities and effective political participation
A/HRC/FMI/2009/4	Recommendations on minorities and effective political participation

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