

Interactive dialogue
with the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues,
Mr Fernand de Varennes
Third Committee, UNGA, 26 October 2023

Mr Special Rapporteur,

Let me thank on behalf of Slovakia for your active role in fulfilling your mandate. We value your approach to thematic recommendations for effective strategies for the better implementation of the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Also raising awareness and increasing the visibility of the topic should be mentioned as well. Slovakia recognizes Special Rapporteur's contribution to the promotion and protection of minorities.

Last year we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. It was an opportunity to exchange on achievements, best practices and challenges minorities face. We appreciated the high-level General Assembly event, which marked the anniversary and reflected on implementation gaps and best practices to enhance the implementation of the Declaration.

Minorities continue to face exclusion and discrimination in many areas of life such as education, health care, political and public life. They are marginalized simply because they are not part of majority population. Minorities are the first target in crisis situations. In any conflicts minorities are the most vulnerable to human rights violations. Slovakia strongly opposes using minority issues as a false pretext for political aims. This always fuels tensions. This has been, after all, the pretext for the Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2014.

Thanks to its international commitments, fourteen formally recognized minorities in Slovakia benefit from protection. More than 30 laws and by-laws refer to the rights of people belonging minorities. Yet, despite some improvements over the past years, more has to be done. We admit that in particular the implementation of policies and Roma strategies is still lagging behind. There is also an urgency to increase an overall tolerance towards minorities living in Slovakia.

Mr. Special Rapporteur,

In your report you focus on to the implementation of the Declaration. In this regard, you concluded that little or no significant institutional development has been made at the United Nations to advance protection of minorities compared to other marginalized groups. Despite challenging environment minorities live in, work on improving their situation continues.

Given complexity of this issue, we would be grateful if you could share more information on this idea.

We thank you, Mr. Special Rapporteur.