

UN Forum on Minority Issues

Madam Chairperson and distinguished members of the Forum, I would like to thank you and MRG for giving me the opportunity to speak about the problems faced by minority women in our country. My name is Shorena Kobaidze, and I represent the European Center for Minority Issues Caucasus.

I would like to highlight the main obstacles related the rights of minority women in Georgia.

National minorities constitute approximately 16 % of Georgia's population. Most minorities live in rural regions and suffer from the low dynamic of economic development and social integration. Minorities living in the urban areas have better access to information and accordingly greater realization of their rights.

The government of Georgia has undertaken a series of measures to enhance the integration of the regions of minorities' compact settlements. It should also be noted that the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia is working on the implementation of the 2010-2013 National Action Plan for Gender Equality, which reflects the needs of minority women, as well as a number of donor supported programmes which are implemented to enhance the awareness of women's right in general. However, more efforts should be made to ensure that the government addresses the specific challenges of minority women, in particular issues of access to education and political participation.

Lack of education in most cases is directly related to the early marriages and pregnancy among minority women in the remote areas of the country. As a consequence, women with incomplete secondary education are more often subjected to the various forms of discrimination and violence. Restrictions caused by the cultural, traditional and religious practices are often discriminatory and lead to severe educational and development exclusion, threatening to the progress of minority women and their empowerment. Therefore I would like to underline the points 50 to 55 of the draft recommendation's that ensures minority women's right to education.

I would specifically recommend – The Government of Georgia should develop and implement policies aimed at mainstreaming gender, in particular in the area of equal access to education, ensuring forms of protection that would allow minority women and girls to realize their human right to education and eliminate discrimination against them.

Effective political participation is another challenge that must be addressed in efforts to enhance minority women's effective participation and their full enjoyment of all other economic, social and cultural rights in Georgia. Minority women are often neglected when addressing principles of equality and non discrimination and in particular transparency and accountability in designing, reviewing and implementing sustainable national strategies and plans of action on the regional and national levels. Women are poorly represented in public and private sector employment. Moreover women belonging to national minorities often particularly suffer from multiple forms of discrimination owing to their double status of being recognized as minority.

Therefore I would like to welcome the points 63 and 64, as well as 71 implementation, which would allow representation of minority women in the political life of the country. In addition to realize the effective participation of minority women in Georgia, I specifically recommend,

-The government of Georgia elaborates an economic policy, creating job opportunities beyond the capital city that will benefit both majority and minority women equally in the rural areas of the country with a special focus of gender and diversity of minority women perspectives and personal experiences.

-Finally, the government establish genuinely democratic and non discriminatory procedures at all levels that would allow minority women's economic independence, social status and political influence.