



EUROPEAN UNION
Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office
and other international organisations in Geneva

**FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES:
Beyond Freedom of Religion or Belief: Guaranteeing the rights of
religious minorities**

6th session, 26-27 November 2013

**Item 3 – Protection of the existence of and prevention of violence
against religious minorities**

EU Intervention

Madam President,

Following my previous intervention, I would now like to focus on the issue of violence against religious minorities and its prevention.

The EU strongly condemns recent attacks against persons belonging to religious minorities in several countries.

We welcome recommendations no. 49, 50, 51 and 52, as we believe that States must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against persons based on their religion or belief. Violence and the threat of violence are widespread phenomena that have to be addressed. Immediate accountability of perpetrators of such violence must be established.

We strongly encourage state and other influential actors in a society, whether religious or not, to speak out against acts of violence and to publicly denounce such acts at the highest level, particularly in cases where officials actively encourage or condone attacks on individuals or communities and property, including places of worship or meeting, or historical religious sites.

Dissuasive penalties should be in place to prevent incitement to violence or hatred, in addition to recommendation no. 23. Furthermore, States and the international community should protest when officials or other influential actors spread inflammatory messages about the holders of certain religious or other beliefs.

The EU will continue to cooperate with existing UN early warning mechanisms including regarding violence based on religion or belief, and will encourage the exchange of best practices.

On the other hand, the promotion of respect for diversity and tolerance is crucial for the creation of a society which is free from discrimination and violence. For this purpose, the EU seeks to raise awareness among its population both about their rights and also about the benefits of diversity. By way of example, the EU supports an information campaign "For Diversity. Against Discrimination.", featuring public events, awards for journalists and competitions for young people.

In this connection, we support the thrust of the draft recommendations regarding training and awareness-raising, as well as the draft recommendations no. 36 and 37.

In respect of recommendation no. 39, which we can also support, we'd like to stress that any violence against women and girls under the pretext of a religious prescription or practice - for example honour killings, FGM or early and forced marriage - deserves to be condemned.

Thank you.