

UNITED NATIONS



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**The Deputy Secretary-General**

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**Video Message to the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations  
Forum on Minority Issues**

***Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes  
targeted against minorities***

New York-Geneva, 25 November 2014  
Recorded 17 November 2014

**President of the Human Rights Council,  
High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
Chair of the Forum on Minority Issues,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,**

**I am honoured to address this seventh session of the  
Forum on Minority Issues.**

**The theme of this year’s Forum is particularly timely and  
appropriate. We have all seen the unfolding tragedy in Iraq  
and Syria where Christians, Turkmens, Yezidis and other  
minorities have been targeted for the most brutal atrocities.  
Sadly, this is not an exception. Violence and atrocity crimes  
directed against minorities all over the world are well  
documented, including war crimes, crimes against humanity,  
ethnic cleansing and genocide.**

**It is the duty of the international community to draw  
lessons from these horrific events. We must prevent them  
from being repeated. We cannot continue to say “never  
again” – in itself a recognition of failure.**

**The United Nations as a whole and all Member States  
must renew our commitments and intensify our efforts to  
promote and protect minority rights worldwide.**

**This Forum will play an important part, by helping us to understand the nature of these crimes, their root causes and inherent dynamics. Gaining a better such understanding will enable us to detect the early warning signs and improve our prevention strategies.**

**The protection of minority rights plays an important part in achieving peace and security. It reduces conflict levels and supports post-conflict reconciliation. It is also a crucial way of achieving development for the poorest and most vulnerable.**

**Minority rights are a vital component of all three pillars of the United Nations: peace, development and human rights. They require the systematic and coordinated engagement of every part of the UN system.**

**This interdependence is at the heart of the Human Rights Up Front initiative, which calls for a system-wide effort to prevent and respond to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The protection of human rights must be front and centre of the UN's work.**

**Moreover, it is at the stage of human rights violations that we must act to prevent escalation, not when mass atrocities are taking place.**

**In this work, we count on the support of Member States, who should exercise their moral and political responsibility and take early action when confronted with evidence or known risk factors for atrocity crimes. Here, the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have a crucial role to play.**

**This Forum and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues are clear demonstrations of the serious intent and commitment of the United Nations to protect the rights of minorities. The Forum has established itself as a unique platform for dialogue and guidance on minority-related issues.**

**I welcome the high level of interest and participation in this year's session of the Forum. I urge you to engage in a truly interactive dialogue, exchanging experiences and identifying opportunities and needs for future action.**

**I wish you all success in your deliberations.**