**Statement by**

**H.E AmbassadorGharibabadi**

**DeputySecretaryGeneraloftheHighCouncilforHuman Rights**

**Islamic Republicof Iran**

**9thsession of the Forum on minority issues**

**25 November 2016, Geneva**

**In The Name of God**

**Mr. Chairperson,**

 The Constitution oftheI.RofIransetsforth legitimate rights and freedoms for various language, religious, racial and ethnic groupsin 24 articles, includingequal rightsforallpeople of Iran from any ethnicity or tribesandequality of all before the law. Against whatwasraisedbyafewinthisforum, ethnicgroupsarenotminoritiesinIran, buttheyformthe majority ofthecountry.The Iranian territory has always been home to a variety of ethnic and religious groups. Under, Article 15 of the Constitution, Farsi is the state language and script; yet, use of the local and ethnic languages in the media including the press and their teaching in schools is permitted and encouraged. It’s worth mentioning that, for example, Kurdish and Azeri are taught in universities also.

 The high and effective position of ethnic groups in all national decision-makings, including in the cabinet, parliament,citycouncils, Assembly of Expertsandadministration of provincesisa clear demonstration of deep belief towards equityandnational unity in Iran. For example, there are many high ranking officials among Azaris, Kurds, Arabs and etc as vice-president, minister, president of the supreme national security council and so on.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

With respect to some references made by certaingroups on ethnic communities, I shall emphasize that my country is proud of all its citizens, meanwhile they have done their utmost efforts for the progress and development of the country and protecting it. While the Iranian noble ethnic groups were constantly defending their country during imposed war, they always raise this big question that where those individuals and so-called NGO’s who claim that are representing them, including in this forum, have been? Our nation is quite confident that they were andstillarecooperating with the aggressor, forming terrorist groups to stay against Iranian people including ethnic groups, and pursing separationist activities.

It is regrettable that the terrorists who have committed murder, killed innocent people, exploded public places,and carried weapons and explosives, be named as Arab, Baluch, Kurd or Azari activists. They may not and should not introduce themselves as representatives of differentgreatethnicgroupsof Iran, since they have no stance among them.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

A very mockery allegation was raised on planting land-mines by Iran at this forum. It’s an undeniable and evidenced-based fact that Saddam regimeplanted around sixteen million landmines in an area of over four million hectares of Iran’s lands during the eight years of imposedwar.However,without international cooperation, over 99% of the contaminated areas were cleared by Iran itself. In this context, Saddam has also used chemical weapons against Iran including inSardashtcity which culminated to the killing of more than 13000 and wounding of 100000 innocent people.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

There is no doubt that each and every country has its own program and priorities towards a better life for its people. In the same vein, we have our dreams towards a prosperous society which the rights of all citizens including minorities were protected. In conclusion, I shall remind that there has never been a province in Iran named Arabestan and Khuzestan has always been in this name. Noble people of Khuzestan, including Arabs, have always been united and disappointed the those a few separationists who live abroad.

**Thank you.**