



Wilton Park

Programme

Protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities: addressing contemporary global challenges

Wednesday 13 – Friday 15 January 2016 | WP1442

The protection of the rights of minorities is provided for under article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and further elaborated in the 1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or linguistic Minorities. Regional organisations have also adopted legal standards, such as the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (1994).

Religious and national or ethnic diversity are two of the main components of pluralism in contemporary societies. At the same time, ethnic and religious diversity, and inadequate government protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, still constitute an unresolved challenge, to varying degrees, in all parts of the world; in recent years this has been compounded by conflict and instability in the Middle East and the growth of extremism, which has highlighted the urgent plight of ethnic and religious minorities in the region.

This meeting will bring together policy makers and practitioners, with other experts, to:

- Take stock of the implementation of international standards for the protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, identifying the challenges;
- Explore how better protection for ethnic and religious minorities in current situations of concern may be provided, in particular by national governments and institutions;
- Identify how the international community should play a role in strengthening protection of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities in particular in the most urgent situations.

The meeting will examine protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities globally, with a focus on the Middle East region.

Attendance at this meeting is by invitation only

In association with:



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

With input from:



UTENRIKSDEPARTEMENTET

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Wednesday 13 January

1430 onwards	Participants arrive
1500	Coffee/tea served
1530	Welcome and introduction Julia Purcell Programme Director, Wilton Park Véronique Haller Head, Human Rights Policy Office, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Berne Geir Løkken Assistant Director General, Section for Human Rights and Democracy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo
1545-1715	1. Global protection of minorities: what are the current challenges and barriers to effective implementation of international standards? Rita Izsák-Ndiaye United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Human Rights Council, Geneva Mark Lattimer Executive Director, Minority Rights Group International, London
1715-1800	Photograph followed by tea/coffee
1730	Briefing for Session 2 facilitators in the Library
1800-1845	2. Opportunities and challenges: further effective implementation of international standards Brainstorm in four parallel working groups
1845	Debriefing for Session 2 facilitators in the Library
1915	Reception
1945	Dinner

Thursday 14 January

0800-0845	Breakfast
0900-0930	3. Feedback from Session 2 working groups in Conference Room
0930-1100	4. Building inclusive societies based on good governance and the rule of law: what more needs to be done to protect the rights of ethnic and religious minorities? Astrid Thors High Commissioner on National Minorities, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), The Hague
1100-1130	Tea/coffee
1100	Briefing meeting for Session 5 facilitators in the Library

1130-1245

5. Parallel working groups focusing on elements of inclusive societies: how to address the concerns in contemporary situations?

Each working group should discuss experiences to date on the issue, lessons learned and recommend best or good practice.

(i) Promoting political leadership, pluralism and good governance: how can minority rights be strengthened, for example through effective policies on power-sharing, decentralisation and participation?

Introduction and facilitation:

Claire Thomas

Deputy Director, Minority Rights Group International, London

(ii) Combating discrimination and marginalisation and promoting economic rights of minorities: what more needs to be done?

Introduction and facilitation:

Henri Tiphagne

Executive Director, People's Watch, Madurai

(iii) The role of mass and social media in protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities: what more needs to be done in preventing and countering hate-speech and incitement?

Introduction and facilitation:

Andrew Puddephat

Executive Director, Global Partners Digital, London

(iv) What role can religious or community leaders and broader civil society play in strengthening protection of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities?

Introduction and facilitation:

Nabil Haddad

Founder and Director, Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Centre, Amman

1300-1430

Lunch

1400

Briefing meeting for Session 8 facilitators in the Library

1430-1500

6. Feedback from Session 5 working groups in Conference Room

1500-1630

7. Ensuring diverse and plural societies and protecting religious and ethnic minorities in conflict affected societies: what are the key issues and how can they best be tackled?

Laila Alodaat

Crisis Response Programme Manager, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Geneva

Nilar Oo

Deputy Country Representative, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Yangon

1630-1700

Tea/coffee

1700-1815

8. Parallel working groups focusing on protection of minorities in current conflict environments

Each working group should discuss experiences to date on the issue, lessons learned and recommend best or good practice.

(i) How can early warning and rapid reaction mechanisms be most effective in preventing violations of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities?

Introduction and facilitation:

Jennifer Welsh

United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect; Professor and Chair, International Relations, European University Institute, Florence

(ii) Respecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in the context of displacement and forced migration

Introduction and facilitation:

Janice Lyn Marshall

Deputy Director, Policy and Law, Division of International Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Geneva

(iii) Legal and other redress for violations of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in conflict situations: what can be most effective? What reconciliation and other confidence-building measures are needed for re-building societies?

Introduction and facilitation:

Thomas Ebbs

Acting Director, Lawyers for Justice in Libya, London

(iv) What role can the international community play in promoting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, at the political level and in the field?

Introduction and facilitation:

Antti Korkeakivi

Head, Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), United Nations, Geneva

1900

Reception

1945

Dinner

Friday 15 January

0800-0845

Breakfast and checkout

0900-0930

9. Feedback from Session 8 working groups in Conference Room

0930-1045

10. How can the objectives of the 2030 development goals be used to protect the rights of ethnic and religious minorities most effectively?

Gay J McDougall

Mulligan Distinguished Visiting Professor of International Law, Fordham University, New York

Sally-Anne Way

Human Rights Officer, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Geneva

1045-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1130

11. Completion of eQuestionnaire

1130-1245

12. Minority rights and the rule of law: what role can the international community play in encouraging pluralism, diversity and protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities?

Ghanim Al Najjar

Professor, Political Science, Kuwait University

Gerhard Doujak

Director, Human Rights and Minority Issues, Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs, Vienna

1300

Lunch

1400

Participants depart