Thank you Madam Chair.

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization would like to address paragraph 26 of the recommendations speaking to the specific needs of minority women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In order to address these needs, UNPO feels it is necessary to incorporate the specific experiences of minority women in situations of one-sided or state-sponsored violence into the draft recommendations. I will briefly address the issue before moving into concrete steps for action.

As we’ve heard at this Forum, minority women are often deliberately and collectively targeted for violence because of their gender and ethnic identity. Moreover, minority women are particularly vulnerable in cases where violence against them is perpetrated by their own government.

Among many challenges facing minority women in situations of state-sponsored violence is the issue of their deliberate isolation. Minority regions experiencing violence involving the state are often completely closed off, including to independent NGOs, journalists, activists, and even UN and humanitarian agencies.

Minority women in such regions, therefore, already denied protection, justice and rehabilitation by their own state, also do not have the benefit of external actors to provide them with these crucial services. Minority women working for human rights and peace in such situations may be particularly vulnerable, as they present a challenge to state policies as well as to traditional gender expectations.

In order to address this difficult problem, we recommend the following concrete steps, which can be incorporated into the general recommendations section of the draft document:

- Special procedures mandate holders should make special efforts during country visits to ensure that ethnic minority regions, particularly those where collective violence has occurred, are visited and minority women living within those regions are specifically and directly consulted for their experiences, as these populations are often marginalized and isolated, making it difficult to monitor and report on abuses against them.

- Governments should ensure full access to ethnic minority regions and minority women in particular during country visits from special procedures mandate holders. Governments should not use the issue of security as an excuse to close off minority regions.

- The international community as a whole should support minority women's activism for human rights and peace at the grassroots level where possible. Where direct support is not possible, special measures should be taken to increase protection and encouragement through international awareness of these movements and the threats they face.

- Finally, efforts should be initiated to include mention of the specific challenges facing minority women in situations of state-sponsored violence and conflict in the international frameworks dealing with women and conflict.

Thank you for your attention.