Thank you Mr/Ms President/Chairperson,

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) strongly supports the notion of promoting and protecting the identity of religious minorities, and believes that the draft recommendations address this sufficiently.

As with our statement yesterday, we would like to state that our recommendations will be based upon our experiences in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

Firstly, the WUC however notes that whilst some of the recommendations may be more difficult to implement due to, for example, financial constraints, others should be more achievable. The WUC feels that the recommendations should better reflect the achievability of some of these recommendations, such as the principle of non-discrimination and non-violence or implementation of the Declaration and international standards.

The WUC would also like to add to the record that writers, journalists and religious scholars hold a special position in the preservation, promotion and identity of religious minorities. They are indispensable to the preservation of the rights of religious minorities, which transcend to other intersectional minority related issues, such as in ethnicity and especially language, as many religions rely upon linguistic tradition or languages which are no longer commonly orally spoken. In seeking to protect the identity of those religious minorities, they can often be subjected to reprisals by both state and non-state actors, which prevents the preservation of those identities.

There is no concrete mention made in the draft recommendations of guarantees that minority NGO representatives may participate freely with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council and especially during the UPR process. This was unfortunately not the case when we were attempting to raise awareness in Geneva of, inter alia, violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief of the Uyghur people in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in view of its then pending UPR in October 2013.

If there were an inclusion of a recommendation pertaining to the protection of minority representatives in this regard, perhaps the Independent Expert's stated goal of increased minority representative participation at the UN would help to strengthen minority rights visibility. We therefore fully support the resolution (A/HRC/24/L.17/Rev.1) on “cooperation
with the United Nations” adopted during the 24th Session of the Human Rights Council, and encourage the inclusion of its sense into the recommendations made for 6th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues.

We also note that there is no mention of protections for access to healthcare or social security. Such an inclusion will strengthen the draft recommendations by ensuring that, for example, women are not denied access to healthcare or social security unless they unveil, as is often the case in China against for Uyghur women.

The WUC would finally like to ask the Independent Expert whether she thinks it suitable to include a recommendation explicitly removing atheist barriers for individuals to participate in state activities, institutions and positions? This is a major barrier to economic, social, cultural and political rights for religious minorities and a great source of tension in certain states, such as China, which has not been given space in the recommendations. It is vitally important that

Thank you.