Thank you Madam Chair.

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization welcomes the ensemble of recommendations regarding education and would like to point out two issues that need to be taken into account.

In order to protect the culture of religious minorities, UNPO believes it is necessary to address the invasive intervention of the States in the private religious practices of minorities. In China this is exemplified by the imposed selection of religious leaders, disregarding the will of the local people, or by forbidding parents from providing religious education to their children within their own homes. In Myanmar, the frequent disturbance of religious ceremonies and the requirement to obtain a permit to celebrate certain religious holidays does not provide a safe environment in which minorities can develop and transmit their culture. The attacks on the transmission of culture from generation to generation are particularly harmful, as they lead to a quick disappearance of cultural practices.

In addition, it is extremely important to address the fact that religious minorities are often spread beyond national borders. Because of severe persecution in their home countries, many religious minorities have been forced to find refuge in neighboring or more remote countries of the world. Such is the situation of the Assyrians who are being forced out of Iraq, or of the Degars whose community in exile keeps growing while disappearing in Vietnam. This brutal separation often entails a massive loss of their culture, including in terms of language and religious practice.

In order to address these two issues, UNPO would like to make the following recommendations:

- Pay specific attention to policies that prevent the transmission of culture from generation to generation among religious minorities, including the selection by the State of religious leaders, the bans on religious education being conducted in the privacy of the home, or of any obstacles against the perpetuation of harmless religious practices. States need to ensure to a safe learning environment for religious minorities.
- Recognize the importance of religious minorities living in diaspora and engage them in the efforts to preserve and promote their cultural heritage, including through the use of modern media. Whenever possible, facilitate the contacts between the diaspora and the communities in the home country, so as to foster continued cooperation and nurture a living culture.

Thank you for your attention