



## INTERVENTION

Tengiz Akhmedov

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### **Agenda item 5. Promotion of constructive interfaith dialogue, consultation and exchange**

Dear Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates:

My name is Tengiz Akhmedov. I represent the Civic Integration Foundation, an NGO based in Tbilisi, Georgia. Our organization mainly works with ethnic Azerbaijani minority of Georgia.

It is a great advantage and an opportunity for us to use the present session of the Forum and share our views on existing practices, approaches and mechanisms that could perhaps be replicated in other countries and regions to guarantee the rights and security of religious minorities.

As stipulated in a recommendation no.44 on training and awareness-raising of the Draft recommendations on guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities of Human Rights Council, constructive steps towards achieving this recommendation have been already made by the Georgian Government. For example, the Ministry Defense has made a decision to let all soldiers in Georgian army to undergo religious awareness-raising training courses before they departure to Afghanistan. We considered it as a positive impact which should be supported by other state institutions as well.

Hereby, we would like to bring your attention to the fact that discrimination cases and intolerance against ethnic Georgian Muslims have been increased in the recent period in Georgia. They represent the religious minority which are from the Adjara region and are living in 45 villages across Georgia. Also they lack possibilities to express their belief freely, at the same time in many cases police can't ensure their safety and prevent actions against them. We believe that all these facts are related to the low public awareness level on equality and the rights of religious minorities.

Therefore, we reaffirm the significance of the Draft Recommendation 44 and deeply hope that our respective government will take it into consideration and develop more comprehensive awareness-raising programmes, for instance we recommend the following:

- The ministry of Education and Science to introduce religious tolerance and diversity courses in public schools
- The Ministry of the Regional Development to provide adequate awareness-raising campaigns for their regional representatives in order to increase their knowledge and understanding of religious minority peculiarities.

Thank you for your attention.