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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

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Towards a Declaration on Diversity: Countering Intolerance through Mutual Understanding

The attacks on multilateralism, the rise of populism, and the realist doctrine that we are witnessing in international relations demonstrate not only the return of Realpolitik if indeed it was ever absent, but also the return of a particular conception of society, at both national and international levels, as well as of the State, which we would like to address.

States distrustful of one another at the macro level, and societies and individuals devoid of empathy towards strangers, towards the other. Is this the landscape we want? Staunch realists believe that this perspective is the only possible one, since individuals are inherently rational and conflictual.

At Sikh Human Rights Group, we are of the view that this distrust between people, communities, and States does not lie in the deepest part of human nature, but is rather a learned behaviour, born of ignorance of what the other entails, of what the other is, and therefore of otherness itself. In this regard, as Plautus said: “Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit.” Which, in plain English, means: “A man is a wolf rather than a man to another man, when he has not yet found out what that man is like.”

Consequently, we refuse to be carried away by the defeatist perspective that societies in which understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation form the triad upon which common life on planet Earth is built are impossible. We advocate cohabiting this planet by weaving bonds between diverse actors, and by celebrating the richness that the multiplicity of cultures, languages, and abilities, to name only some of the dimensions in which human beings are diverse, brings to humanity.

Otherwise, this lack of knowledge of the other will continue to be learned, enduring among us and thereby perpetuating the discrimination and persecution of that which feels uncomfortable or strange to the majority group.

It is paradoxical that, despite the growth of scientific knowledge, discrimination does not cease, and may even intensify. To date, the fight against discrimination has been carried out primarily through legal mechanisms backed by the State and through international policies of varying degrees of resilience. This has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the former, the consequences of discrimination are clarified, theoretically deterring such practices. Among the latter, the fight against discrimination remains dependent on the political mood of the government of the day.

For this reason, in order to support and complement this approach, we have been promoting an instrument that fosters understanding between majorities and minorities, making the former more comfortable with the latter by valuing the diversity they bring as a positive aspect of our contemporary societies. In this way, ignorance and distrust between people, communities, and States will gradually be reduced.

This promotion of diversity can be realised through a Declaration on Diversity, which will provide a framework through which States may showcase their best practices in this area, so that others may draw inspiration from them and apply them within their own contexts. If we succeed in changing people’s mindsets, we will be able to counter the threats facing minorities, the growing intolerance towards diversity, and the politicisation of diversity.