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UN independent expert urges Austria to promote cultural diversity and rights



Farida Shaheed

15 April 2011 – The United Nations independent expert on cultural rights today encouraged the Austrian Government to consider cultural diversity an invaluable resource and to take concrete measures to promote it by recognizing the ways of life of minority groups.

“The Government should mainstream cultural diversity and the cultural heritage of Austria’s diverse populations by incorporating minority cultures and histories in public schooling curricula, media and cultural activities,” [said](#) Farida Shaheed, the UN Independent Expert on Cultural Rights.

“They should also promote intercultural understanding and minority language proficiency in all official institutions and among civil servants,” she said.

Ms. Shaheed welcomed a number of “excellent initiatives” to promote cultural diversity and cultural rights, especially the codification of a Romani language, but said that the approach was fragmented.

She recommended that a unified framework and an institution be put in place to promote cultural diversity, oversee cultural heritage matters and promote the right to participate in cultural life. She also urged the Government to consider extending support to other linguistic and ethnic minorities in Austria.

“Despite efforts to comply with provisions of the Ethnic Groups Act, bilingual education is actually rare and highly dependent on the personal efforts of individual teachers and principals. Ensuring cultural rights is about empowering individuals and communities to create culture as continuously evolving ways of life, each culture being equally valued,” she added.

Ms Shaheed urged the Government to prioritize adoption of an integrated national human rights action plan and a human rights institution in conformity with the international standards known as the “Paris Principles.”

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[UN experts link World Day for Cultural Diversity with human rights](#)