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Honorable Madam President,

I am a Member of Parliament from the state of Tamil Nadu, India. My heartfelt thanks to you for giving this opportunity. On behalf of the Dalits and other minorities I congratulate you and Ms Gay McDougall for this historical initiative for effective political participation of Minorities.

I wish to bring to the notice of this august forum, certain obstacles facing Dalits, women, religious and linguistic minorities. They face exclusion from economic, educational and other resources based on caste, gender, religion, race and ethnic or work and descent, which restrict effective political participation. UN Principles and Guidelines for the Elimination of 'Discrimination based on Work and Descent' has addressed some of these obstacles. I hereby raise certain issues for finding solutions by this august forum.

Casteism is a peculiar phenomenon in Asia and parts of Africa that has permeated into all religions and in all spheres of life affecting politics, business, technology, and the growth of nations. This Casteism creates a structure and mindset in the socio and political institutions which obstruct Dalits, women and other minorities to take up leadership positions despite their active presence in them. This needs to be investigated and critical redressal measures to be taken.

Dalits in some Asian countries have provisions for quotas/reservation for political participation. But there are no such provisions for Dalits who have converted to Islam and Christianity. This is severe violation of human rights and discrimination which need to take note of.

We also need to ensure the rights of Dalit women by prohibiting discrimination and violence against them while exercising their right to political participation. All appropriate measures to facilitate women's political inclusion and prevent proxy representation and guaranteeing property rights.

The World can judge the Nations only by the rights enjoyed by the minorities. The United Nations has been championing the cause of Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka, yet, instead of finding a political solution, only military solutions were found at a very heavy cost of human lives and human rights. I was privileged to be a Member of the Parliamentary Delegation which visited Sri Lanka in October 2009 and saw the painful plight of Tamil Minorities in the military managed internment camps for Tamils. There are still two hundred thousand people in camps under the pretext that they are being rehabilitated whereas being questioned and tortured. Yet the world has not awakened to condemn this heinous crime and cruelty to minority Tamils in concentrations camps. They and other minorities like the Muslims need to be recognized as legitimate ethnic minorities with power of political leadership and self determination.

In conclusion, Madam President, I would like to quote our Great Liberator and the Champion of Dalit and Minority Rights, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who said, "In a democracy, we have equality of politics and with untouchability, we will have inequality of social and economic rights. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest."

THANK YOU