

*Human Rights Council – 33rd session
Item 3 – General Debate*

Speaker: Albert Hengelaar

Friday 16 September 2016



Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance draws attention to the situation of minorities at every Human Rights Council. In most nations Christian Evangelical believers are a minority. We also believe that minorities are often the target of identity politics. Majority constituencies bolster their political clout by targeting those who are different. For the pretension of social cohesion, the minority is punished.

This is the threat side of the situation. But there is more. How effective is it to discriminate minorities? Is it sustainable to organize an open society on the basis of uniformity? What stimulates participation and responsible behaviour? The majority claims to champion peace and prosperity but excludes peaceful minorities? The minority is threatened and the majority indulges in self-righteousness.

A sustainable, developed state is not possible without equal rights of all citizens. Diversity is not a threat but a necessity for long term peace and in fact for reaching SDG16. The treatment of minorities by the authorities is a litmus test for human rights and rule of law. That warrants constant attention to the subject.

One nation that has a keen understanding of including minorities is India. Yet, the Evangelical Alliance of India sees the number of well documented assaults to Christian communities almost double in the first half of 2016 as compared to the previous years. Some Indian states have laws – named “Freedom of Religion Acts” – that are officially there to prevent religious conversions being made by “force”, “fraud” or “allurement”. In practice these laws are used to obstruct individual freedom of conscience, as Hindu nationalists invoke them to harass Christians. Such incidents are choking the breath of a modern society and will in the end lead to collapse of sustainable institutions. Only individual freedom of conscience will create the equality of opportunity for all citizens. We are confident that India will deal with retardations.

We thank you Mr. President.