Oral Statement
United Nations Forum on Minority Issues – 19th session
Panel 1: Regional frameworks, mechanisms and initiatives to advance minority rights
26 November 2026
Delivered by Janet Epp Buckingham

Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance, with alliances in over 160 countries and representing 650 million evangelical Christians worldwide, is particularly concerned about the protection of religious minorities.

Regional human rights mechanisms play an important role in protecting minority rights and providing remedies when states fail to uphold their obligations. However, their effectiveness and accessibility vary considerably.

Europe has the oldest and most developed regional human rights system, with 46 member states and an established individual complaints mechanism, including binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

The African and Inter-American human rights systems have also developed important jurisprudence and provide mechanisms for individual complaints. The African system encompasses 54 states, while the Inter-American system covers 35, although not all have accepted the binding jurisdiction of its Court.

By contrast, the ASEAN human rights system, encompassing 11 states, focuses primarily on dialogue, consensus and capacity-building, without an individual complaints mechanism. Similarly, although the League of Arab States has proposed an Arab Court of Human Rights, it is not yet operational.

Significant gaps therefore remain. Many of the world's most populous countries, particularly in South and East Asia, as well as countries in Central Asia and the Middle East, lack effective regional mechanisms for seeking redress for human rights violations.

This makes UN human rights mechanisms all the more essential. For individuals and minority communities in countries without effective regional avenues of recourse, UN mechanisms may be their only international means of seeking accountability and protection.

We urge this Forum to recognize the importance of strengthening accessible and effective international mechanisms for the protection of minorities.

Thank you.