

Minority Issues Forum  
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Morning Session

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To Madame Chairperson Mohacsi and to Madame Independent Expert Gay McDougall, I am Dr. Brooks Robinson speaking on behalf of the non-governmental organization BlackEconomics.org of the United States. I wave aside my previously prepared comments to intervene in an unusual way and raising concerns about the Forum's format:

- As an economist and a critic of inefficient systems, it seems important to highlight the economic inefficiency of the current Forum format. Non-expert participants expend valuable resources to travel, in some cases, thousands of miles, to attend a forum at which they are only permitted to speak 120 seconds. In our view, these participants are the ones with the rich stories to tell about their experiences on the ground in the real world of education. While they may travel to the forum site for other reasons, it clearly seems irrational for these participants to travel so far to say so little. The inefficiency of this process is made more apparent by the prevailing economic conditions in the world, which should motivate greater economic cost efficiency.
- The above-described condition may be remedied by making modifications to the current Forum format. These modifications could include:
  - Expanding the number of days during which the Forum is conducted.
  - Shortening the time allotted for presentations by invited experts. Because experts are identified, in part, by their contributions to the literature, it appears reasonable to rely on their publications to reveal the essence of their contributions. A reduction in the time allotted for experts' presentations would yield more time for presentation by non-experts.
  - Convening the Forum or a Forum Supplement in cyberspace. It may be necessary to place restrictions on participation in a cyberspace Forum (i.e., all presentations would need to be conducted in one language—presumably English); however, the costs savings (travel, accommodations, etc.) could be tremendous. Today, most nations have sufficient Internet connectivity to permit participation in cyberspace Forums; and most persons who would participate in a Forum would have the necessary equipment and software to participate in a cyberspace Forum. Educators often discuss the need to use, and the advantages to using, “the technology.” Cyberspace

Forums present a great opportunity to meet that need and to exploit those advantages.

We comprehend that the current Forum format was inherited as a United Nations' tradition. However, it seems inappropriate to permit traditions to prevent us from adopting more efficient methods of conducting the Forum's business.

Madame Chairperson, thank you very much for the opportunity to make this contribution.