

**Presentation of L.14 entitled Freedom of Opinion and Expression
by H.E. Ambassador Hisham Badr
of the Arab Republic of Egypt**

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honor to introduce the draft resolution entitled Freedom of Opinion and Expression contained in document L.14, jointly presented by the United States of America and Egypt. Egypt embarked on this venture on the basis of the principles of consensus, collective ownership, dialogue and respect for all, and added value. Today, I strongly believe that the Council has before it a text that fulfills these principles.

Mr. President,

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is a closely held and cherished right for every individual and community alike. It is an essential foundation of any democratic society. Through education, imparting and exchanging of ideas and information, creation and innovation, the freedom of expression is indispensable for the self development of the individual, the enjoyment of other fundamental rights, progress of societies and indeed humanity as whole. All civilizations have contributed to the consolidation of this right and the notion of human rights as we know it today. We were heartened that this fact was stressed in President Obama's speech in Cairo on June 4th.

The joint initiative of today is, in itself, a vivid illustration and practical translation of dialogue among civilizations, which we all cherish and adhere to. The holy Koran says : "Oh mankind, we have created you from a single pair, male and female, and made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another".

Mr. President,

It is because of the immense potential that freedom of expression embodies, that, as attested to in past and recent history, it has been ^{sometimes} misused to proliferate negative racial and religious stereotyping and incitement to racial and religious hatred.

These scourges have taken new dimensions in the last few years, and every State must condemn and resolve to combat them in accordance with the obligations stipulated in human rights law obligations. Using freedom of expression as a means to promote and fuel racism and xenophobia, is incompatible with the true nature of this very right, and with democracy itself.

For its part, the media is a main pillar of the exercise of the right to freedom of expression. It reveals the facts, reflects the conscience of society and uncovers human rights violations. For this reason, the media must be free to do so at all times, including in time of war, while conducting itself in a professional and ethical manner.

Mr. President,

The present text emphasizes the aforementioned elements, responsibilities and obligations in unambiguous terms. It may not meet everyone's expectations in full, including ours, but it marks a new shift that helps create a common vision for action here and at home.

We hope that the Council will be able to adopt the draft by consensus as a solid basis to build upon ^{is} the future.

I thank you