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STATEMENT BY PAKISTAN ON BEHALF OF THE OIC IN THE GENERAL
DEBATE UNDER AGENDA ITEM 9

Madam President,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the OIC.

The OIC Group unequivocally condemns the recent production of a film in the United States called "The Innocence of Muslims" which tries to defame Islam and the personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). This film is a blatant attempt to provoke religious hatred, discrimination and intolerance that has led to unfortunate loss of life and damage to property. In this context, we also strongly condemn the violence that resulted in the deaths of a number of people including a US diplomat.

We note that the Secretary General of the United Nations, The High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the United States have also expressed their opposition to the film.

Incidents like this clearly demonstrate the urgent need on the part of States to introduce adequate protection against acts of hate crimes, hate speech, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from defamation and negative stereotyping of religions, and incitement to religious hatred, as well denigration of venerated personalities.

Over the past months, there have been a number of examples of acts of incitement to hatred. These include despicable incidents involving the burning of the Holy Quran, and the publication of defamatory cartoons. OIC countries have repeatedly called on the Governments concerned to take action to avert these offensive actions but nothing has been done on the excuse that such action would be a violation of the freedom of expression. The OIC underlines that the situation created by the malicious act affirms once more the urgency for all States to fully uphold their obligations under international law", ~~and then~~ *in particular* ~~add to the language of ICCPR~~ articles 19 and 20 " and article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

We disagree. These are not exercises in freedom of expression but deliberate attempts to discriminate, defame, denigrate and vilify Muslims and their beliefs. Such acts constitute flagrant incitement to violence and are therefore in contravention of ICCPR Articles 19 and 20. It is therefore abundantly clear that there exists an urgent need to establish an internationally acceptable threshold between freedom of expression and incitement to violence and hatred.

The OIC has never advocated any prohibitions on freedom of expression. Our emphasis has been on the need to examine the consequences of unchecked, unbridled and irresponsible statements and actions made by certain groups and individuals that deliberately instigate and incite violence on the basis of religion or belief. This can include situations involving religious minorities or situations in which minorities react violently either in their home societies or in societies where their co-religionists are in a majority.

None of this is completely uncharted territory. For instance, we are all aware of the fact that laws exist in Europe and other countries which impose curbs on anti-Semitic speech, holocaust denial or racial slurs. We need to acknowledge, once and for all, that Islamophobia in particular and discrimination on the basis of religion and belief are contemporary forms of racism and must be dealt with as such. Not to do so would be a clear

example of double standards. Islamophobia has to be treated in law and practice equal to the treatment given to anti-Semitism, especially in the legislations.

We recall the general comment 11 of the Human Rights Committee and general comment of the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination which confirm that restricting the freedom of expression on issues relating to racial discrimination applies also for incitement to religious hatred.

The OIC's resolution on "*Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping And Stigmatization of, and Discrimination, Incitement to Violence, and Violence against Persons based on Religion or Belief*" adopted by consensus at the 16th session of the Human Rights Council on 24 March 2011, was a concrete attempt to address this very concern by bringing all the key players on board. The consensus resolution was the result of a long and often, difficult negotiation process.

The OIC welcomes the joint statement by the OIC Secretary general, Arab League Secretary general, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and European Union High Representative for foreign and Security policy in which they shared the profound respect for all religion and refuse to allow religion to be used to fuel provocation, confrontation and extremism. They reiterated their strong commitment to take further measures and to work for an international consensus on tolerance and full respect of religion, including on the basis of UN Human rights Council resolution 16/18.

At the heart of the resolution are a series of practical steps to be taken by states to combat the ever increasing instances of intolerance, negative stereo-typing, stigmatization and discrimination and violence all over the world. This core issue has been approached in a manner that is acceptable to all so that all stake-holders are bound by the commitments contained in the text. The OIC believes that there is an urgent need to take concrete steps towards the implementation of the plan action contained in the resolution to avoid the occurrence of such condemnable incidents in the future. If this is not done, there is a very real chance of a breakdown of the delicate consensus on this issue as reflected in the resolution which would be unfortunate for all of us.

The OIC remains ready to work with its international partners at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UN General Assembly in New York to address and resolve these critical issues in order to better protect and promote human rights as well as peace and security within our respective societies.

We also call upon the High Commissioner and her Office to assist this important effort.

I thank you.