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Intervention by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Mr. President,

My Delegation aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Pakistan on behalf of the OIC and therefore I will limit my intervention to a few comments.

We join previous speakers in extending our gratitude to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance Mr. Douadou Diene for his revealing and interesting presentation.

The report presented in accordance with the Council's resolution 4/9 entitled "Combating defamation of religions" clearly identifies quite a few alarming and dangerous trends.

Azerbaijan condemns all forms of religious discrimination and other forms of related intolerance. We are alarmed by general increase in the defamation of religions, most particularly by the recent instances of Islamophobia that inflame the hatred among various religious communities.

We are also seriously concerned about the phenomena of political use of discrimination and xenophobia, rising political tolerance of hostility and discrimination against Muslims reflected in the report that would contribute to division in societies and could seriously aggravate further the situation.

Unfortunately, we have to agree with the sombre, alarming but eye-opening conclusions of the Rapporteur that the dangerous trend of defamation of religions is on the rise.

Only through mutual respect and recognition of each other's cultural differences would it be possible to overcome the abovementioned evil trends. As a country with a long-standing tradition of tolerance, multiculturalism and non-discrimination Azerbaijan fully shares the view of Mr. Diene that intercultural dialogue is essential and we should foster multicultural and tolerant society among us. Last but not least, we all need to join our efforts in ensuring the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action.

Thank you.