

**OIC Explanation of Vote before the Vote on Resolution L.15-Rev 1, Elimination
of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief,
14 December 2007**

Mr. President,

I would like to underline that this Explanation of Vote before the Vote is being made on record and as such it may be reflected in full in the proceedings of the session.

It is extremely important for the OIC to explain its vote on the draft resolution "Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief" before the Council.

I would like to underline the following points:

- (a) the OIC opposes all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief.
- (b) the OIC has consistently supported the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.
- (c) we would not have a problem with the general thrust of the resolution but for some concerns of fundamental importance to the OIC member countries.

The OIC has entered into serious negotiations with the European Union and other sponsors of the resolution since August this year. In the latest, intense phase of negotiations, starting in November, the sponsors did reflect some of our concerns in the draft resolution. In this regard, they had to work hard with their constituents. For that we thank the sponsors in general and Ambassador Francisco Xavier Esteves and his able team in particular.

Despite these intense negotiations we were not able to resolve our differences on five important issues:

- (a) a clear pronouncement on the recent instances of deliberate stereotyping of religions, their adherents and prophets in the media and by political parties and groups in some societies.
- (b) respect for and protection of all religions and beliefs.
- (c) respect for national laws and religious norms about the right to change ones religion.
- (d) endorsing all the work of the Special Rapporteur without any room for difference of opinion.
- (e) setting a new standard for the prerogative of the states' response to the request for visit by the Special Rapporteur.

Because of divergence in these areas, the OIC asked for a vote on the resolution and would abstain on it. The OIC in fact has tabled resolutions which we are not pressing to a vote, not the least because we did not have the sufficient support, but because we believe that proposals of such importance ought to be adopted by consensus.

Hence, we dissociate ourselves from operative paragraph 9(a), because of its phrase "including the right to change one's religion or belief". Thus this phrase is not considered operative by the OIC in its legal validity or effect.

We had hoped that we could reach consensus. It was not possible but we would continue with the dialogue on these issues of vital importance in future. We value such dialogue with all our interlocutors.

I thank you Mr. President.