

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Mission Permanente d'Observation  
de l'Organisation de la Conference Islamique  
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève

Permanent Observer Mission  
of the Organization of the Islamic Conference  
to the United Nations Office in Geneva

البعثة المراقبة الدائمة لمنظمة المؤتمر الإسلامي لدى مكتب الأمم المتحدة بجنيف

### Statement of

The OIC Secretary General His Excellency Prf. Ekmeleddin IHSANOGLU

Before the

15<sup>th</sup> Session of Human Rights Council

(16 September 2010, Palais des Nations-Geneva)

**Mr. President,**

**Madam Commissioner,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset allow me to congratulate, Ambassador Sihasak Phuangketkeow on your election as the President of the Human Rights Council.

15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council is inaugurated at a very critical juncture. During this period, the Council will be reviewing its work and functioning in line with the GA resolution 60/251, in which your role is paramount and critical. We are confident that under your able stewardship, Member States will be able to reach a consensual outcome that serves to improve the work and functioning of this Council. The OIC assures you, Mr. President, of its fullest cooperation in this regard.

**Mr. President**

The new session of Council is also coincident with regrettable events that are deliberately meant to defame religions as well incite hatred, xenophobia, discrimination and violence against religions, in particular Islam. The increasing incidents of violence and discrimination on the basis of religion must not be ignored. We hope that this and other related issues remain an important priority in the work of the Council.

The most recent and unfortunate in the series of such events was the announcement pertaining to Burn a Koran Day. It was highly provocative towards the religious sentiments

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of Muslims everywhere in the world and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. On August 24, 2010 I issued a cautionary statement on the plan to burn the Holy Quran and urged the American people as a whole as well as the world community to reject the call of the Gainesville Church pastor. I emphasized that the holy book of Quran was the last revelation of the Almighty Allah with lofty teachings that set the basic principles and guidelines for the human being to manage his behaviour and relationship with himself, with others and with his creator. Indeed one of the unique aspects of the teachings of the Holy Quran is that they transcend time, history and space and are universal in nature. I reiterate that Islam is a religion that implies peace by its very nomenclature. Holy Quran speaks of universal peace, security and brotherhood and forbids killing of innocent human beings and considers murder of an innocent person belonging to any religion, color or ethnicity as the murder of the entire humanity. It places a premium on human dignity – a concept that transcends Human Rights. As a matter of fact, the Holy Quran and other revealed books are rightly considered as the pioneers of human rights by those who have an in-depth knowledge in this area.

The OIC is deeply concerned that the instances of intolerance, discrimination and acts of violence against followers of certain religions occurring in many parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia and discrimination against religious minorities, threaten to impede their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In this regard all xenophobic campaigns of fear mongering and discriminatory measures - both in policy and practice - which restrict, prohibit or discriminate against of any religion such as ban on the construction of minarets, organization of events that incite hatred like Burn a Koran Day, and other discriminatory measures must be strongly condemned by the international community. A recurrence of such events substantiate OIC's call for a normative approach to deal with this menace that continues to pose a clear and present danger to peace, security and stability in the regional as well as the global context. Such acts fuel discrimination, extremism and misperception leading to polarization and fragmentation with dangerous unintended and unforeseen consequences.

I am encouraged and inspired by the strong statements made by US political and religious elite including those by President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Similar statements by other leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, UN Secretary General Ban ki Moon, the Vatican and other members of the International community and public opinion at large indicate the gravity of this unfortunate episode.

**Mr. President,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The culture of peaceful coexistence and inter-communal and interreligious tolerance that the international community is trying to achieve is under serious threat from extremist fanatics. It is a serious matter that requires serious consideration and collective efforts on the part of the international community.

We must stand united against such events which endanger peaceful coexistence between nations and create an environment conducive to violence and to the violation of the whole range of civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights of individuals and communities. This Council as the human Rights conscience of the

international community must play a key role. The Council has obligation under the international Law, including those regarding equal protection of the Law, any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is an important safeguard to ensure the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all.

I take this opportunity to call upon all states to consider taking specific measures aimed at fostering a domestic environment of religious tolerance, respect and peace, including but not limited to:

- a. Encouraging the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promoting dialogue and inspiring constructive action toward shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration, and media education;
- b. creating an appropriate mechanism within the government to, inter alia, identify and address potential areas of tension between members of different religious communities and assisting with conflict prevention and mediation;
- c. encouraging training of government officials on effective outreach strategies;
- d. encouraging efforts of community leaders to discuss within their communities causes of discrimination and evolving strategies to counter them.
- ~~e. speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence;~~
- f. adopting measures to criminalize the incitement to imminent violence based on religion
- g. underscoring the need to combat denigration or negative religious stereotyping and incitement to religious hatred in general by strategizing and harmonizing actions at the local, national, regional and international levels through, inter alia, education and awareness-building;
- h. recognizing that the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence;

On part of International community, I call upon the United Nations to support internationally oriented preventive measures to combat negative religious stereotyping including denigration of religions and in this regard, I request madam High Commissioner for Human Rights to setup an Observatory in the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights for documenting such acts which leads to incitement to religious hatred, hostility and violence that takes place around the world. I further request the UN High Commissioner to present a report to that effect to the Human Rights Council on an annual basis.

The importance of creating and sustaining spaces for a meaningful and result oriented engagement towards evolving approaches to combat such acts of incitement to hatred on religious grounds cannot and must not be discounted. We would, otherwise, be leaving space to be filled in and the agenda hijacked by the radicals. It is through an outright rejection of such acts and sustained engagement at evolving norms to deal with them that we would prevail against the extremists who are out to rock the very foundations of peaceful coexistence.

I thank you.

