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**Statement of the  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

**Before the Third Committee**

**Sixty-Sixth Session of the General Assembly**

**Of the United Nations 2011**

**Item (66)**

***Elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination & Xenophobia***

**Delivered by  
Dr. Maisah Alsobaihi**

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*Mr. President,*

The Delegation of my Country supports the statement given by the Group of 77 and China.

*Mr. President,*

The world is still suffering from the escalating phenomenon of racism, intolerance and xenophobia. Lately, many regrettable events and phenomena have taken place and claimed the lives of many innocent people, destroyed houses of worship and desecrated the sanctity of many holy places and religious symbols. Moreover, a great number of racist movements and organizations emerged in several states in response to calls of racial, ethnic superiority and discrimination along with dreaded bigotry and xenophobia; thus negatively impacting social structures and coexistence among several segments of the society. Undoubtedly, governments before other entities should be entrusted with undertaking all steps and measures to identify the causes and sources of such phenomena; and to intensify national and international efforts to deal with them.

Saudi Arabia is a key supporter in advancing and strengthening international efforts to promote a culture of dialogue, tolerance and peace at all levels. It strives to remove all causes of tension caused by ethnic discrimination and religious intolerance between nations and peoples.

*Mr. President,*

The increasing pace of hatred and intolerance against religions in general, the continuity of negative stereotyping of Islam and spreading hatred against Muslims in particular in many countries lately represent a great concern for us. Freedom of speech and expression should not be used as means of abuse and to inspire spirit of hatred against certain groups in the community.

The continuation of the phenomenon known as (Islamophobia) and its outcomes such as regrettable racial incidents and the continuation of hate campaigns against the Islamic religion and Islamic symbols dictates that we should muster national and international efforts to propagate tolerance and peace; and to work on promoting awareness of the dangers of discrimination and hatred amongst both individuals and societies. In this context, we would like to emphasize that our position in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emanates from our Islamic religion which oblige us to respect and revere all celestial religions, messengers and prophets. In addition, Islam calls upon us to refrain from offending other religions and faiths.

*Mr. President,*

The position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding the opposition to racism and racial discrimination is founded on Islamic Sharia which affirms the dignity of human beings regardless of race, color or ethnicity. The Sharia calls for the realization of equality and justice among humankind since they were born from one soul; and for respect to cultural and religious diversity as well. The Kingdom enacted several national legislations that aim at safeguarding such noble values and prohibit racism and racial discrimination, notably: The State Statute of Governance; Judiciary, Labor and Printed Materials and Publications laws which all incorporate many legal acts that prohibit and criminalize establishing or financing any organizations that call for racism and bigotry as well as publicizing any publications and/or materials that incite hatred. These laws and rules are in conformity with the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other international agreements and instruments to which Saudi Arabia acceded.

At the national level, the Kingdom established a number of agencies that call for the propagation of the cultures of human rights, tolerance, dialogue and, in particular, the elimination of racism and prejudice. One of the prominent entities in this regard is the Center for National Dialogue which represents an efficient cultural and training mechanism to consolidate purposeful dialogue that aims at rejecting discrimination and promoting tolerance and peace in the society. The Center organized a multitude of meetings and forums dedicated to deepening dialogue among all segments of the Saudi Society; and to discuss and find solutions to all issues pertaining to racism and discrimination while respecting cultural and religious diversity and preserving the national identity and unity of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz, affirmed that this Center will serve as a venue for responsible manifestation of views and would have a tangible impact upon the elimination of racism, excessiveness, and extremism.

At the international level, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques launched his well known initiative for a dialogue between followers of different religions and cultures. The initiative reflects, *inter alia*, the Kingdom's desire for peaceful coexistence, and the rejection of racial discrimination and prejudice; in addition to the manifestation of the intention to promote international efforts striving to build civilized interactions amongst nations and peoples without enmity, hatred or discrimination.

In connection with this initiative, several major conferences were held, most notably were the conferences of Makkah, Madrid and the New York conference held within the framework of the UN General Assembly during 2008. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 in Vienna, the Convention on Establishing King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Global Center for Dialogue among Followers of Religions was signed. This Center aims to promote justice, peace and reconciliation and to address the exploitation of religion to justify repression, violence and conflict; in addition to promoting respect and preserve the sacred character of the holy places and religious symbols. The Center is to be managed by an administrative board that represents world's major religions and beliefs. Furthermore, the Center will have a consultative body consisted of hundred followers of major religions in the world. On this occasion, it pleases me to convey my Country's Government gratitude to all countries, international organizations and bodies and religious figures who contributed to the development of this vision on ground, particularly the Kingdom of Spain and the Republic of Austria.

*In conclusion Mr. President,*

By observing at this time the suffering of a special segment in some societies as a result of racism and discrimination, we must believe that racial discrimination against entire peoples, depriving them from their inherent right of self-determination and attempting to eradicate their religious and cultural identity represent the highest degree of racism, discrimination and intolerance; as those actions create negative and dangerous consequences that threaten not only the disadvantaged people, but also the international peace and security. Undoubtedly, the clearest illustration today of such comprehensive racial discrimination heavily lies before us against the Palestinian people. This entire people is still intensively subjected to all forms of racial, political, socio-economic, and religious discrimination; and the striking evidence of these aspects is manifested in the policies and measures implemented by Israel in Palestine. Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territories, to deprive the Palestinians from their legitimate rights especially their right of self-determination, to evict and displace them from their lands in addition to building a racial separating wall, to implement a consistent policy of confiscating properties and to raze religious and archeological sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the occupied lands. All these actions are taken with a view to wipe out the national and cultural identity of the Palestinian people.

*Thank you Mr. President.*