

## **6th session of the Forum on Minority Issues**

### **V. Promotion of constructive interfaith dialogue, consultation and exchange**

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Thank you, madam chair,

The struggle for minorities rights has transcended many obstacles and is now a well-recognised subject of international human rights law. However, as made clear in the last two-day discussions, there still exist many challenges at the national, regional and international levels, both in terms of granting comprehensively legislation as an effective implementation of the existing ones to realise the goal of multicultural and multireligious societies that are these within and without. Rights of minorities are directly linked to the well-recognised norms of non-discrimination, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion. While the freedom of expression and religion provide bases for the religious minorities to freely practice and manifest their religious belief, the right to non-discrimination is an obligation of every state to ensure that the religious minorities exercise these rights without any fear or discrimination, either by private or public sources. Here, it must be emphasised that states not only bear the principal responsibility to take actions against incitement, violence or discrimination on the basis of religion. But also, to take a proactive approach in preventing such discrimination. This preventing approach (...) include a human rights education, from the grassroots level, dialogue between various cultures and religions, and as well as speaking out against all acts of (...) incitement, and intolerance. Many of the reasons behind islamophobia, lead to violence and discrimination, in various parts of the world could have been avoided if effective state authorities would have spoken against such acts, rather than standing only for the right of the freedom of expression of the inciters and violators. The OHC together with its ex-partners have lead the efforts to combat the incitements of discrimination, hatred and violence based on religion to a conceptual approach reflected in HR resolutions 16/18. Effective implementation of this resolution, which is based on the existing international human rights law would greatly help address these contemporary manifestations of racism through dialogue and cooperation. And important step forward in this direction would be to clearly demark it the limits and linkages of incitement to this resolution which is well-established in article 19 and 20 of ICCPR.

Madam chair, clearly, religions should be part of the solution and not the problem. Religious leaders, therefore, have a major role to play in the building tolerance, peaceful, and inclusive societies. Together with public figures, religious leaders must be included in all intercultural and interreligious dialogues as well as publicly condemning any advocacy of religious hatred and discrimination. Faith communities, in particular, the majority faith, in respecting countries have an additional responsibility to focus more in common denominators and less in moral values that denies them for the success of this dialogue. At the same time, this dialogue must be conducted in a respectful manner (...)