

**Remarks by Permanent Representative during International Day to Combat
Islamophobia**

15th March 2024

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the OIC Observer Mission for convening this side event on an issue of immense contemporary salience.

We welcome the remarks made by the Secretary General of OIC, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and all distinguished panelists.

I also wish to thank DG UNOG and her team for their support.

The declaration of 15 March as an International Day to Combat Islamophobia by the General Assembly is a demonstration of global solidarity.

International cooperation to combat Islamophobia is necessary and urgent.

Independent media reports have pointed out a significant rise in Islamophobic crimes in many parts of the world in the recent past.

This trend has manifested in several ways including discrimination, stereotyping, and acts of hostility against individuals and communities based on their faith or cultural background.

A significant increase in such incidents risks undermining the pluralistic and democratic values that underpin the international order.

International efforts to combat Islamophobia, or any other form of religious and racial intolerance and hatred are anchored in the foundational principles of the international human rights framework.

Non-discrimination, upholding human dignity, mutual respect, freedom of religion and protection from acts of hatred and incitement are the common goals for which peoples of all racial and religious backgrounds are equally entitled.

The call to join hands against Islamophobia demands acting on these principles—nothing new, different or special.

The international human rights covenants provide the legal basis for action against Islamophobia and other forms of religious intolerance and hatred.

There is scope to strengthen our action by reinforcing normative convergences in many ways.

Our work in the Ad Hoc Committee on Elaboration of Complementary Standards must gain momentum.

There is also the need to invigorate the political consensus and action in implementing Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18.

The Council has also responded to provocateurs who used the form of attacking Holy Quran to express hatred towards a community. The support to the HRC resolution 53/1 signifies that not just the people of a single faith, but large majority of humanity condemned such acts.

Accountability must be made part of the efforts to strengthen implementation.

Religious hatred can begin as a form of an unpleasant cultural expression, but if left unchecked it can turn into an epidemic, transforming into a social malaise and growing into a major political crisis.

A balanced but comprehensive approach is needed to deal with it.

An approach that covers the bandwidth of actions envisaged in resolution 16/18.

Action must begin by fostering collaborative approaches that promote harmony and address misperceptions through training and dialogue.

It should include early warning tools and preventive action at the local and community levels.

As an important next step, we must not forget to unambiguously speak out against expressions of hatred. Being an apologist for a provocateur is in fact siding with hate.

Preventive action must not end at social and political censure but also include administrative and legal measures which can provide a sense of security and comfort to target persons.

Finally, let us accept that when a majority of the humanity calls something as unacceptable expression of hatred then it is time to join international solidarity and take legal action against it.

This International Day should not only be about raising awareness but also a step towards international cooperation in the form of sharing best practices, expertise, resources and learning for experience.

We look forward to strengthening such cooperation.

Thankyou