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**Statement on behalf of the OIC by Ambassador Zaman Mehdi, Deputy Permanent Representative during the General Debate Agenda Item - 9
28 March 2022**

Mr. President,

The OIC reaffirms the importance of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all its forms and manifestations.

Unfortunately, despite commitments and political slogans, systemic racism, racial profiling, discriminations and violence are rampant.

We are far behind from our objective of translating the ideals of Durban Declaration into reality. Growing trends of racism and rise of populist politics and right-wing extremist ideologies are undermining the social fabrics of societies with harsh consequences for the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

The OIC is of the view that status quo is no longer an option. We need to walk the talk and curb this menace through commitment and meaningful actions.

The OIC rejects any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, creed or religion.

Mr. President,

The OIC is gravely concerned over the steady rise in incidents of discrimination, hatred and violence on the basis of religion, especially against Muslim individuals and communities.

Anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia, often tolerated or sanctioned under state-patronage, remains pervasive, either in the guise of “counter-terrorism”, “national security” measures or efforts to seek “electoral gains”.

The OIC is equally concerned over several forms of discrimination such as defamation of religion. We condemn and call for an end to incitement to violence through denigration of revered religious personalities and symbols, including by holding caricature competitions; destruction of mosques; provocative statements by public leaders that insinuate stereotyping of Muslims and Islam with terrorism and separatism, and the imposition of ban on the construction of minarets.

The OIC registers its deep concerns over the ban on facial veils in several countries including by the host country to this Council where according to reports, Muslim

communities experience discrimination on the grounds of religion more than any other religious group. The rulings by certain Courts of Justice, permitting headscarf & hijab ban on Muslim women and girls is tantamount to institutionalizing anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia. These steps constitute clear violation of international human rights law and contradict the ideals of tolerance and pluralism.

We call for ending such Islamophobic actions and upholding the fundamental freedoms, including of Muslim women and girls.

We welcome the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution, declaring March 15 as International Day to combat Islamophobia.

On the eve of the tenth anniversary of HRC Resolution 16/18, we reaffirm the importance of preventive and affirmative measures to combat hate speech and xenophobic acts.

We also underline the importance of respect for religious and cultural diversity and interfaith and intercultural dialogue aimed at promoting a culture of peaceful coexistence, tolerance and respect among individuals, societies and nations.

The OIC reiterates its call for commencement of negotiations on the international binding instrument to combat religious discrimination and intolerance including Islamophobia.

I thank you