



Statement on behalf of the OIC Group, delivered by Mr. Afaq Ahmed, Counsellor,
during General Debate Item 9
54th HRC Session
6th October 2023

Mr. President,

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

We thank the Chair-Rapporteur of the Adhoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards, Ambassador Kadra Hassan for her report on the 13th Session.

We renew our support to Committee's mandate. The early finalization of the additional protocol would help to bridge the existing legal and regulatory gaps in strengthening the existing international human rights architecture and combating all forms of contemporary racism, including Islamophobia.

Considering current alarming trends of religiously motivated hatred including public and deliberate burning of the Holy Quran and states' inadequate response, this mandate has become more relevant.

We suggest the Chair-Rapporteur to present the Chair's text as initial draft for textual negotiations.

Unfortunately, the meaningful progress in negotiations, despite passage of 16 years, remains elusive due to States' reluctance to recognize the gravity of the challenges in this thematic area. At the same time, the lack of progress does not absolve states from their existing obligations to prevent and prosecute acts of religious hatred pursuant to ICCPR and ICERD.

The OIC is gravely concerned over systematic targeting of individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

We unequivocally condemn the practice of insulting Islam, Christianity, Judaism and any other religion including desecrating sacred books and religious places.

The recurrent instances of desecration of the Holy Quran, ban on wearing facial veils, misuse of national security measures and stigmatization of Muslim and African migrant communities are ugly manifestations of contemporary form of racism.

The OIC values the importance of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. However, we remain of the firm view that freedom of opinion or expression does not grant a license to hate speech, deliberate ridicule or willful insult of other people's religion, sacred



books as well as religious places and personalities. These rights must be exercised in line with stipulated responsibilities and duties.

We call on the High Commissioner and Special Procedures to speak out against troubling incidents of religious hatred.

We also reiterate our call on the international community to take meaningful legislative and administrative steps to prevent the growing plague of racism in all its contemporary forms and manifestations.

I thank you!