



**National Statement, delivered by Mr. Afaq Ahmad, Counsellor, during Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights at the 46<sup>th</sup> session of Human Rights Council**

**(03 March 2021)**

**Madam President,**

We thank the Special Rapporteur for the report.

We agree with the SR that the COVID pandemic , by restricting movement has reduced avenues of exposure to art, culture especially traditional cultural activities unique to different societies and communities. We seek views of the Special Rapporteur on COVID-19's disproportionate negative effects on cultural and religious festivities.

Additionally, the increased use of online platforms due to COVID related lockdown, there are corresponding concerns on security, fraud and authenticity of cultural expression online. This has precipitated xenophobic expressions and hateful language in the domain of art and culture invoking the right to freedom of expression. We invite views of Special Rapporteur on the intersection of freedom of expression and amplification of hate speech online.

I thank you.