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Statement

By

Ambassador Masood Khan

Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations

on Behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

On the

**Report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms
of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
intolerance**

at the Sixth Session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva

13 September 2007

Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan, Permanent Representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC, on the report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Mr. President,

I am making this statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The OIC appreciates the efforts of Mr. Doudou Diène, in highlighting the manifestations of defamation of religions and in particular the serious implications of Islamophobia on the enjoyment of all rights, submitted in response to the Human Rights Council's Resolution 4/9 entitled "Combating defamation of religions".

We agree with the special rapporteur that defamation of religions cannot be dissociated from a profound reflection on the trends of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that are developing in the current political and ideological context.

The report identifies a number of disturbing trends such as:

- Political and electoral exploitation of the religions through political alliances that enable extreme right or nationalist parties to implement their racist agendas with democratic legitimacy.
- Ideological violence that predisposes the general public to discriminate against a particular religious community.
- Islamophobic statements, falsely claiming to be scientific or scholarly. The Special Rapporteur has rightly observed that media reports on issues directly or indirectly related to Islam tend to reinforce prejudices and stereotypes.
- Steps and policies that curtail or disregard civil and political rights under false notions of preserving 'national security'. Such policies also violate cultural, social and economic rights on the grounds of protection of 'national identity'.
- Rising political tolerance of hostility, Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims. An increased number of political parties and social movements that are openly Islamophobic and sponsor racist and xenophobic policies.

Mr. President,

The OIC condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The international media continues to use the misguided actions of a small extremist minority as an excuse to malign the entire Muslim World as well as the religion of Islam. International community must address the root causes of terrorism, such as the situations of grave injustice and repression involving Muslims, and conditions of poverty and lack of opportunity, which fuel extremism and terrorism.

We condemn all forms of anti-Semitism and Christianophobia.

During the past session of the Council, the OIC has been cautioning that Muslims are being demonized and dehumanised as Jews were in the interwar period in the last century. Freedom of expression is exercised selectively, restricting it, and rightly so, in case of anti-Semitism but its unhindered application is justified in regard to Islamophobic speech and publications. This practice should not be encouraged.

The Report's conclusion that defamation of religions is on the rise, is alarming but factual. Recent acts of defamation in the shape of blasphemous sketches in Sweden and posters in Switzerland testify to this conclusion. We are particularly concerned over a rising tendency to dismiss the significance of individual acts of discrimination as **trivial**. Such acts aggravate hatred among various religious communities and are against the spirit of multiculturalism.

We welcome different initiatives being taken to combat the phenomenon of defamation of religions and alliance of civilizations.

Remedy lies only in closer interaction among followers of different religions. At national levels, states should check the political use (or misuse) of discrimination and xenophobia. States should integrate, in their national policies, the promotion of dialogue among cultures and religions and avoid policies, postures and statements inspired by the divisive concept of the 'clash of civilizations'.

At the international level, the follow up of the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, and consideration of adopting complementary international standards on the interrelations between freedom of expression, freedom of religion and non-discrimination are of primary importance.

There is a need to fill the juridical vacuum in addressing the issue of religious intolerance. The OIC suggests that Council in conjunction with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should take a lead and start consultations to examine the possibility of drafting a Convention to combat defamation of religions and to promote religious tolerance.

I thank you Mr. President.