

independence of judges and lawyers

special rapporteur

promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence

extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

democratic and equitable international order

violence against women

older persons

slavery

health

torture

extreme poverty and human rights

working group

freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

cultural rights

persons with disabilities

water

education

environment

internally displaced persons

solidarity

foreign debt

substances and wastes

working group

Arbitrary Detention

human rights defenders

terrorism

minority issues

indigenous peoples

independent expert

working group

mercenary

enforced or involuntary disappearances

adequate housing

trafficking in persons

sale of children

african descent migrants

racism

human rights and transnational corporations

women in law and in practice

independent expert

freedom of religion or belief

freedom of opinion and expression

special rapporteur

working group

ISLAMOPHOBIA

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 18/16: REACHING OUT
 PROCEEDING OF THE PANEL MEETING



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE
 مركز جنيف لحقوق الإنسان والحوار العالمي
 CENTRE DE GENÈVE POUR LA PROMOTION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DU DIALOGUE GLOBAL



The Geneva Centre for Human Rights
Advancement and Global Dialogue

**ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION
16/18:
REACHING OUT**
PROCEEDING OF THE PANEL MEETING

GENEVA, 29 APRIL 2016
PALAIS DES NATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

There is no homogeneous consensus around the chronological coinage of the term “Islamophobia”, which is defined by Oxford Dictionaries as “*dislike of, or prejudice against, Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force*”¹. Regardless, of when it was first coined, however, the expression has only gained currency in recent years, particularly following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is in the aftermath of this and related events that a “War on Terrorism” was proclaimed by the US. There followed a misconceived conflation between terrorism, Islam, and Arab culture.

What the Oxford Dictionaries definition fails to convey is the nature of Islamophobia not only as a “dislike of, or prejudice against, Islam or Muslims”, but also, from the human rights perspective, as a form of racism. The religious aspect of racial discrimination is also recognized, although implicitly, in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), according to which “States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law”², notably in the enjoyment of, *inter alia*, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

This extensive interpretation of Article 5 of the CERD is not the only legal basis for the acknowledgement of religion as a ground for racial discrimination. The definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism was explicitly stated, for the first time, during the 2001 World Conference against Racism, in Durban (South Africa). The Durban Declaration recognized with deep concern the increase in Islamophobia in various parts of the world, as well as the emergence of racial and violent movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas against Muslim and Arab communities³. The following definition of Islamophobia has also

1. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/islamophobia>.

2. Art. 5, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted and opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965, and entered into force on 4 January 1969 (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>).

3. Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 8 September 2001, pg. 12 (<http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>).

been provided by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: “Islamophobia is a contemporary form of racism and xenophobia motivated by unfounded fear, mistrust and hatred of Muslims and Islam”⁴.

In 2004, in his *Report on the Situation of Muslim and Arab peoples in various parts of the world*, requested by the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Doudou Diène, *Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*, described Islamophobia as a “contemporary form of racism”, stating that “*the historical and cultural sources of Islamophobia are such that, if its full extent is not recognized as a matter of urgency and treated with vigilance, it will result in the crystallization of cultural and religious differences if not clashes of religion and culture*”⁵. He therefore highlighted that the acknowledgment of Islamophobia necessitates rigorous and systematic assessment of its reality, manifestations and expressions⁶.

Even before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the term “Islamophobia” was spread by the report published in the late 90’s by *the Runnymede Trust’s Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia: Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*, which was published in November 1997 by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

According to the report, the expression refers to an “unfounded hostility towards Islam” as well as to the “practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs”⁷. In the Commission’s opinion, questioning, criticizing and disapproving Islam are not, per se, manifestations of phobia and fear; adherents of other faiths, along with agnostics and secular humanists, also disagree with Islam, on the basis of both points of theology and religious practice. What is considered as phobic and prejudiced is thus a peculiar unfounded form of hostility towards Muslims, leading to discrimination and sectarianism.

4. 5 Fourth OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia, May 2011.

5. Report submitted by Mr. Doudou Diène, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to the Human Rights Commission on 23 February 2004: E/CN.4/2004/19, “Situation of Muslim and Arab peoples in various parts of the world”, pg. 2

(<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G04/110/72/PDF/G0411072.pdf?OpenElement>).

6. Ibid.

7. Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*, pg. 4 (<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/companies/17/74/Islamophobia-A-Challenge-for-Us-All.html>).

The Commission therefore acknowledged the existence of a dichotomy between “open” and “closed” views about Islam, and summarized the recurring characteristics of the latter as follows:

Islam is seen as monolithic and static, rather than diverse and dynamic;
 Islam is seen as “other” and separate, rather than similar and interdependent;
 Islam is seen as inferior, rather than different but equal;
 Islam is seen as an aggressive enemy, rather than a cooperative partner;
 Muslims are seen as manipulative, rather than sincere;
 Muslim criticisms of the West are rejected, rather than debated;
 Discriminatory behaviour against Muslims is defended, rather than opposed;
 Anti-Muslim discourse is seen as natural, rather than problematic.⁸

The roughly 20 million Muslims living in the European Union are depicted by some as a threat to Europe’s way of life, even in countries where they have lived for generations. In times of economic and political crisis, Muslim minorities have been serving as scapegoats, and the myth of an ongoing “Islamization” of the European continent has been nurtured by fearmongering xenophobic and populist parties.

The manipulation of Islam for political purposes has been resorted to by terrorist groups to legitimize their crimes and has been echoed by some Western media. The latter have, voluntarily or unwittingly, distorted and misrepresented Islam as a religion of violence. This distortion was exacerbated by the attacks of Charlie Hebdo / Hyper Cacher and of the Bataclan Theatre in France during 2015, and led to the conflation of violence with Islam by associating the latter with international terrorism.

Media from the West and from Islamic regions have the power to join forces to oppose the rising tide of intolerance and racism now undermining the human rights of innocent or even vulnerable Muslims wherever they happen to suffer from such discrimination.

Yet, the misuse of certain terms in the context of the elaboration of a new contemporary phobic language has exacerbated the anti-Islamic discourse. The world press is awash nowadays with the expression of “jihadists”, (mis)used when referring to a terrorist enterprise condemned by the political and by Christian and Islamic religious authorities with equal force. “This pervasive form of expression therefore looks as if it is becoming part of contemporary politically correct language in English – as well as in French – speaking circles to refer to terrorist groups in the Arab and broader Islamic regions. This is leading to a woeful conflation

8. Ibid.

between Islam, of which jihad is a part, and terrorism which is totally alien to it.” – underscored Idriss Jazairy. The word “jihadist” is a western neologism whose root “jihad” is taken from the Arabic root “johd” meaning “exertion” or “effort”. The “greater jihad” is defined by Islam as the exertion to overcome temptation and “capital” sins, whereas the “lesser jihad” is the right to self-defense proclaimed also in the UN Charter. The members of DAESH the self-styled “Islamic State”, who are anything but Islamic, should be considered as terrorists whose criminal behavior is the very antinomy of the term “jihad”. Yet the acceptance in common parlance of the expression of “jihadist” to describe their criminal nature legitimizes these crimes by implying that such wanton behavior is permitted by one of the world’s main religions. This ominous misnomer is both a cause and consequence of Islamophobia. There is a need to research other terms now part of the contemporary European phobic discourse which under the cover of freedom of opinion and expression, surreptitiously introduce “off-the-peg” ideological biases when debating issues occurring, or originating, in the Arab region in particular.

According to Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in light of which “*everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference*”, the exercise of the freedom of opinion is absolute while the freedom of expression is not absolute: it is limited by the respect of the rights of others. “*The exercise of the rights provided in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions (...): (a) for respect of the rights or reputations of others; (b) for the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.*”

Such a limitation is also acknowledged by the *Report on hate speech and incitement to hatred*, submitted by the *Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression*, Mr. Frank La Rue, to the General Assembly in 2012. “*As with all human rights, the exercise of the right to freedom of expression should not be aimed at the violation of any of the rights and freedoms of others, including the right to equality and non-discrimination. (...) International human rights law therefore recognizes that the right to freedom of expression can indeed be restricted where it presents a serious danger for others and for their enjoyment of human rights. (...) Moreover, article 20 (2) of the Covenant explicitly provides that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is to be prohibited by law*”⁹.

9. Report submitted by Mr. Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to the General Assembly on 7 September 2012: A/67/357, “Hate speech and incitement to hatred”, pg. 11 (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/N12/501/25/PDF/N1250125.pdf?OpenElement>).

By means of its Resolution 16/18, the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) expressed its concern that “*incidents of religious intolerance, discrimination and related violence, as well as of negative stereotyping of individuals on the basis of religion or belief, continue to rise around the world*”, and condemned “*any advocacy of religious hatred against individuals that constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence*”. Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 calls upon all member States to foster religious freedom and pluralism, to ensure that religious minorities are properly represented, and to adopt measures to criminalize incitement to violence based on religion or belief.

How can one establish the difference between legitimate criticism and disagreement in relation to any religion, including Islam, on the one hand, and unfounded prejudice and hostility such as Islamophobia, on the other?

The panel discussion assessed the progress made in the implementation of Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 and tried to provide answers to this dilemma by exploring ways to delineate the boundaries between the right to freedom of opinion and expression, on the one hand, and the right to freedom of religion and belief, on the other. The objective was to enhance harmony between these two fundamental rights, which are often presented as incompatible. The purpose of the discussion was also to acknowledge the interconnectedness and interdependence between them, as well as the possibility to overcome potential challenges in their application on the ground.

By means of an objective, unbiased assessment of the phenomenon of Islamophobia, of its political and historical roots, the panel discussion aimed to analyze opportunities and challenges ahead for combatting hatred and discrimination directed against both Muslim individuals and communities. The discussion recalled the dangers related to a misinterpretation of the Holy Qur’an, as well as the value of the spirit of modernity underlying a proper understanding of Islam, touching upon what Dr. Malek Chebel, a renowned Algerian philosopher and anthropologist, defined as “Islamic Enlightenment”. The ultimate goal pursued was to assess the deteriorating situation and to lay the foundations for a collective and concerted attempt at charting the way forward to overcome Islamophobia. This would follow up on the recommendations laid out in Human Rights Council resolution 16/18.

Two-thousand and sixteen is the fifth anniversary of endorsement by the General Assembly of the Human Rights Council resolution, 16\18 on “*Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping and Stigmatization of, and Discrimination, Incitement to Violence and Violence Against, Persons based on Religion or Belief*”.

In order to commemorate this event, the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue organized a panel discussion entitled “Islamophobia and the Implementation of UN Human Rights Council resolution 16/18: Reaching out”, under the auspices of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva. The panel was held on the 29 April 2016 at the Palais des Nations. It addressed the widespread phenomenon of Islamophobia in the West in recent years, seeking to reach out to people of all creeds and beliefs with the ultimate objective of eradicating racism based on defamation of minorities, epitomized by the parlous situation of Muslims in the West.

The significance of the panel discussion’s topic “Islamophobia” was illustrated through the considerable number of attendees from all segments of the International community. Representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN Office in Geneva including Algeria, Austria, Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, the European Union, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen. Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders also attended the panel discussion.

This discussion took place on Friday 29 April 2016, from 10:00 to 12:30, at *Palais des Nations* (Room XXII). It was opened by **H. E. Dr. Hanif Hassan Ali Al Qassim**, *Chairman of the Geneva Centre’s Board of Management* followed by the sponsor of the event, **H. E. Ambassador Tehmina Janjua**, *Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva*. The Guest of Honour was **H. E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu**, *Former-Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation*. The moderator of the panel was **H. E. Idriss Jazairy**, *Resident Board Member of the Geneva Centre*.

The panelists included: **Cheikh Khaled Bentounès**, *Spiritual Guide of the Tarika Alawiyya, Founding President of the Moslem Scout Movement of France*; **Dr. Raphaël Liogier**, *Director of World Religion Watch and Professor at the Institut d’études politiques d’Aix-en-Provence*; **Mr. Trevor Mostyn**, *Journalist, Lecturer in “Islam and the Modern World” at Oxford University*; and **Mr. Doudou Diène**, *former Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*. The Discussant of the panel was **Mr. Roberto Savio**, *Founder of Inter Press Service*.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PANEL MEETING

The present report provides a summary record drawn up by the Geneva Centre on the discussions which took place during the panel meeting. It does not commit the authors of the remarks themselves whose statements which were recorded are reproduced in full in the annex to the report.



Intrinsic Values of Islam that Preach Love and Peace

The panel was launched with opening remarks delivered by **H. E. Dr. Hanif Al Qassim**, *Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue*. His speech carried a strong message warning against the worrying spread of extremist ideologies and the increasing polarization along cultural and religious lines at world level. He pointed out that espousing such extremist ideologies is tantamount to providing credibility to Samuel Huntington's thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations".

H. E. Dr. Hanif Al Qassim stressed the importance of the role that media play in the pursuit of global peace. He questioned the media's role in playing this role, referring to the duality of western media outlets in marketing DAESH or Boko Haram with emphasis on Islam, whereas other violent groups claiming to be Christians such as "the Lord's Resistance Army" were never presented as relating to Christianity by the same media outlets. H. E. Dr. Al Qassim concluded by reminding the participants of the intrinsic values of Islam which are increasingly being conflated with unscrupulous deeds reported wrongfully to have been carried out in the name of Islam and Muslims.



Islamophobia is Delinked from the Biological – Ethnic Connotations of Racism

H. E. Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, *Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva* drew attention to dangers of mainstreaming prejudice and of the frequent conflation between acts of people coming from a Muslim background and Islam itself. Ambassador Janjua expressed her appreciation for the work done by some Western countries to address this issue. She recalled that the original resolution (the predecessor to resolution 16/18), was first introduced in 1998 by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at the Human Rights Commission. It was deliberately placed under the agenda item dealing with racism, racial discrimination and intolerance. This was to emphasize that Islamophobia was not just an expression of religious intolerance but had become a contemporary form of racism and was internationally classified as such.

She added that Muslims are not a race, and that the whole validity of the concept of racism as a biological, and ethnic category is therefore contentious. However, the notion of racism is valid in the case of Islamophobia when defined as the belief that Muslims are a human group with particular characteristics that makes them different from others. By that standard, an individual is predetermined by virtue of her or his belonging to a particular group. Hence, in the case of Muslims, racism takes the form of a systematic denigration of the group. Thus Islamophobia is delinked from the biological – ethnic connotations of racism.

Ambassador Janjua asked how the issue of the most inflammatory assertions printed under the cover of freedom of speech is going to be addressed? Would it be done through ensuring more awareness of the justified limits of freedom of speech? Was there an understanding of the gravity of the situation brought about by Islamophobia, when we speak about it? Are we dealing with random incidents of hate speech and violence against few individuals, or are we witnessing the emergence of a pervasive climate of prejudice, hostility and discrimination?

Ambassador Janjua inclined towards the latter. However, many might not share this realization and this should be a matter of concern.

Furthermore, she asked how we could have a more balanced discussion about the causes of Islamophobia? She explained that this question stems from the dominant view that prejudice against Muslims is a response to violence and extremism emanating from groups that justify the actions in Islamic terms.

Ambassador Janjua also wondered how we were going to establish a distinction between justified criticisms of a group of people and their beliefs and hostile and prejudiced comments thereon. In her view, conflation leads to taking us into a more general discussion of the limits to free speech. She added that the background note for this event points out that international human rights law acknowledges that freedom of expression can be restricted in certain cases, especially when it endangers others, or negatively influences their ability to enjoy their rights. Stressing that freedom of speech is absolute, therefore needs to be questioned.

She added that the myth of a monolithic intolerant Islam resistant to inquiry, debate, and criticism needs to be dispelled, confirming that Islam has a rich heritage of self-interrogation. She illustrated that by giving the example of *Dr. Momamed Iqbal* and of other theologians. This, she said, was willfully ignored to demonize Islam.

Finally, the Ambassador concluded her statement by requesting from the international community to devote more attention to the significant role of repeated external interventions in Muslim countries leading to an exacerbation of extremism, which is one of the main sources of Islamophobia.



A Social Alchemy

H. E. Mr. Idriss Jazairy, *Resident Member of the GCHRAGD Board* said this panel provided a unique opportunity to bring together some of the distinguished thinkers and decision makers concerning the issue of Islamophobia on the world scene. Adding that the panelists hailing from both the global North and the global South show that racism and intolerance whether based on ethnicity, culture or beliefs is an affront to civilizations at large, and not just to those that are targeted by it. *Mr. Jazairy* said this panel was about social alchemy. The alchemy which can transform the theme of Islamophobia from being a source of confrontation predicated on fear of diversity into an agenda for cooperative action; an action to broaden areas of consensus based on the recognition of the commonality of the challenge for all; an action also based on shared interest in discarding the interrelated demons of racism, radicalization, and extremism that they mistakenly thought they brought under control after World War 2.



Human Rights Council and Resolution 16/18

The keynote speaker **H. E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu**, *Former-Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation*, spoke about the heated process of negotiations that took place between the OIC member states, the European Union, the United States and other stakeholders and that led to an agreement in 2011 unifying the efforts to address radicalization, extremism, and terrorism.

Dr. *İhsanoğlu*, viewed Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 as an important legal tool that provides guidance for future efforts to combat violence and radicalization. He further elaborated on the initial purpose of drafting resolution 16/18 to start a global dialogue on how to engage with the increasing trend of vilification of Islam and of its followers. This resolution came after the heated discussions resulted from the UN consensus acceptance starting in 1998 of OIC sponsored resolution on combating defamation of religions. The unanimous adoption of the initial resolution eroded over time. This erosion was the result of two converging forces. The first was an objection raised specifically by the United States on the grounds that it was contradicting the First Amendments of the United States Constitution. The other force simply sought to distort the resolution through fabricated interpretation and legitimizing fearmongering by claiming that the Muslim world wants to silence the West and invade Europe. So, when Prof. *İhsanoğlu* proposed his eight point proposal during the 15th session of UN Human Rights Council in September 2010, it was well received by all parties and resulted in the adoption of resolution 16/18 in 2011.

Moreover, Dr. *İhsanoğlu* offered a detailed explanation on how the publication of the infamous Danish cartoons of September 2005 resulted in issuing a joint statement upon his initiative from the UN, the OIC Secretaries General and the EU High Representative that was a turning point for the ongoing international negotiations on the freedom of speech and the prevention of incitement to hatred. The follow up to this statement gave birth to resolution 16/18, which bridged polarized views on how

to effectively address intolerance based on religion or belief.

Dr. İhsanoğlu concluded by urging OIC member States to strive to have the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 highlighted in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy resolution 60/288, adopted by the General Assembly as a means to fulfil Pillar I (Measures to eliminate conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism) and to actively pursue the İstanbul process.



Peace making

Cheikh Khaled Bentounes, *Spiritual Guide of the Tarika Alawiya and Founding President of the Moslem Scout Movement of France*, began by questioning whether after three quarters of a century following World War 2; Islamic States had succeeded in practising tolerance and living together in peace as good neighbours. He also pondered the issue about the issue whether or not they had managed to employ the international machinery to promote economic and social advancement of their peoples.

Cheikh Bentounes also stressed the importance of collective investment to build the House of Peace whose basis is primarily the culture of peace. He added that the value of peace is priceless, but to understand its economic and human benefit there was still need to beware of the price of war and violence. He referred to the UN report for the preparation of the Global Humanitarian Summit at Istanbul from 23rd to 26th May 2016, saying “The report revealed that the number of major wars has increased from 4 in 2007 to 11 in 2014. The economic and financial costs of conflict and violence has reached \$ 14,300 billion or 13.4% of the global value of the economy, adding to that the human trauma, without forgetting the resentment that often was passed down generations”. He highlighted that in all circumstances peace will be of less cost for humanity.

Cheikh Bentounes affirmed that the culture of peace has become a reality; yet maintaining it will not be an easy task. He also questioned how we could succeed in passing this culture on to our children.



Islamophobia and European States Policies, The Case of France

Prof. Raphael Liogier, *Professor at the Institute d'Etudes Politiques d'Aix – en-Provence* then focused on the origins of Islamophobia. According to him, Islamophobia is connected globally, but specifically associated with Europe. He also expressed his opinion about the concept of the “Clash of Civilization” advocated by Samuel Huntington, which he described as strange, saying that Huntington did not invent this concept. The Clash of Civilizations according to him existed long before 1993, using some examples to support his opinion: the first marked historical event where the concept of Clash of Civilizations was implied was at the time of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956 by president Gamal Abdel Nasser, despite the fact he was not a biased Muslim. Prof. Liogier added that this particular historical event presented a threat to former colonial powers perceiving it as a kind of humiliation, and created an aversion towards all things related to Arabs and Muslims in Europe for utterly political reasons. A new form of racism, “cultural racism” emerged since then, he said.

Moreover, he added, Islamophobia is fed by politics and has been strengthened by the adoption of specific policies, most particularly by European states. He added that a number of European policies were inspired by the fear of a clash between civilizations. Prof. Liogier clarified that Islam and Muslims were an easy target to put the blame on whenever western policies fail to achieve their targets, saying that Europeans used this pretext claiming that their values and cultures are challenged by Islam. This kind of one-size- fits all approach to identity is increasingly used today to justify the racist policies that target Muslims in Europe.

According to Prof. Liogier, the rise of rightist parties in France does not represent as much of a danger to the unity of the country and the coherence of the aspirations of its population as the rise of populist parties. Such parties gain their popularity through the support of public opinion by claiming that they serve the public's

general interests. By speaking in the name of the people, populist parties do not really leave a voice for the people anymore, he said.

Those parties promulgate the message of hatred and racism towards Islam and Muslims under the pretext of protecting national interest. Similar parties also exist in Europe under different names, calling for protecting certain core values of European cohesiveness such as the non-religious values (secular values) in France, the freedom and liberty notion in Austria, the notion of progress in Norway, and the notion of independence in the UK.

He explained that the extreme rightist parties claim that they try to preserve the Christian traditional values threatened by Islam, and the extreme leftist parties claim that they fight Islam because it is an enemy to modernity, referring to issues like women's rights. This in turn creates a new political centrality at the heart of the political scene. Thus, populist parties are at the centre of the political process and determine priority themes for the political arena nowadays. Consequently, people are subjected to discrimination and prejudice, and the security policies for combating terrorism become ineffective.

Prof. Liogier indicated that the state in France pursued policies towards Muslims inhabiting the country that are conducive to ostracism. He added that even France's security policies tailored to protect the country from so-called "Islamic violence" ended in failure due to the weak structure of the intelligence services, which mainly rely on spying on the Muslim community by the Muslims themselves.

He concluded by saying that combating Islamophobia is as important for Muslims as for others because rejecting the Muslim identity has become a pretext for rejecting other identities such as the Roma and the Gypsies.



“In the Forest when the tree branches fight with each other, the roots embrace each other.”

Mr. Doudou Diène, *Former Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* focused on the intellectual aspect of the debate, believing that deconstructing the concept of Islamophobia is essential. He recalled the notion of Islamophobia, “the hatred of Islam and those who practice Islam”; a hatred that has historic roots and that is not a recent phenomenon. However, the key factor of present day Islamophobia is the context of mutation resulting from the simultaneous occurrences of multiple and diverse crises: economic, financial, environmental, cultural and ethnical, he added. The concept of mutation is more expressive than the crisis of deep transformation of the main paradigms of all societies including value systems and ideologies.

Mr. Diène underlined that Islamophobia has political, religious and historical dimensions, and that it is deeply rooted in the intellectual and ideological construction of the national identity of a number of countries. Stressing the need for an objective deconstruction of Islamophobia away from the ideological controversy through contextualising the debate on Islamophobia. *Mr. Diène* mentioned the need to address the challenge of the rise of the extreme right in Europe, giving an example of the most recent presidential elections in Austria. According to him, the central pillar of the platform of these political forces is primarily the defence of the constructed national identity, and the incitement of hatred of its “enemies”; whether religious, cultural or ethnic Islam. The most consequential fact of this situation is that those political forces are electorally becoming the majority parties in most of the European countries. Such development constitutes a profound threat to the democratic fabric of the concerned countries. Islamophobia, as a political agenda is thus a threat to democracy. Muslims are now explicitly targeted in this context in Europe as Jews were in the past century.

Mr. Diène spoke about the recent development concerning issues of the rejection of migration, particularly pointing to the rejection of Syrian migrants by some European countries that is explicitly legitimized by the Muslim identity of these migrants. Another essential factor affecting the present day context of racism was the rise of all forms of racism and not only Islamophobia.

Accordingly, Mr. Diene described the factor of identity crisis as a profound source for the rise of all forms of racism in general, and islamophobia in particular. The fundamental pillars of the construction of national identity are: religion, race, and culture. Those pillars are progressively challenged and called into question by the dynamics of multiculturalisation of all societies, and fuelled by the process of economic globalisation and human migration.

He also found the problem of identity crisis to be a second source for racism. He said that the present situation can be read as the historical birth of multicultural identities, as migrants started expressing their cultural or religious identity behind their economic assigned dimension. Migrants are thus breaking the silence of their social, economic, and political invisibility. Mr. Diene said consequently “Religion is becoming a key factor of the identity crisis [...] Islamophobia is explicitly the ideological and political expression of the resistance to this spiritual and identity mutation.”

Mr. Diene drew attention to the construction of Islamophobia and its conceptual framework and dynamic process, explaining that it has been elaborating a framework of self-legitimation.

He said the concepts of terrorism and radicalization confirm the creative fecundity of this exercise; the concept has been universally instrumentalized by political powers to discredit any form of opposition. The combat against all forms of religious phobias and anti-semitism requires a conceptual vigilance and intellectual rigour and a shift from an endless ideological and theological debate, he said.

Speaking about the remedies and solutions for combatting racism, Mr. Diene brought up the question of intellectual legitimacy, referring to Huntington and others, which legitimized racism by writing an intellectual work. He concluded that in order to combat racism, there is need for a paradigm shift in different areas by rejecting the intellectual and theological debate of differentiation and focusing on the common ethical values found in human rights. *Mr. Diene* finished by stressing that multiculturalism is the underlying reality for all societies that can be transformed objectively into inter-culturalism. He called for creating societies where the racial singularity must be respected, also highlighting the need for promoting policies emphasizing the acknowledgment and respect for the other on

the basis of equal human rights for all.

Mr. Diene closed his speech with an African proverb, which should guide the process and dynamic of interculturalism: “In the forest while the branches of the trees are fighting with each other, their roots are embracing each other”. The branches are symbolic of the outer diversity; religious, cultural, or ethnic, and the roots represent the common universal values. The challenge is to promote the value of interculturalism in societies, by nourishing the diversity of the branches with the unity of the roots.



The History of Islamophobia and perceptions of the West

Mr. Trevor Mostyn, a journalist and a lecturer on “Islam in the Modern World” at Oxford University, touched on how non-Muslims tend to view Islam negatively through the prism of recent events, ignoring the benign behaviour of most Muslims who wish to integrate into the nation states in which they are settled. He said that many Europeans hope that an Islamic reformation lies ahead and that post-Enlightenment thinking will eventually prevail.

He argued that the media feed very negative images of Islam, ignoring the fine citizenship of the vast majority of Muslims who are usually the primary victims of terrorism. The media tends to follow the rule that ‘if it bleeds, it leads’. He also warned against the dangers of the misuse of language such as the word Jihad which means ‘struggle’ and only on rare occasions ‘war’ and Fatwa which means ‘legal opinion’, not ‘death sentence’, to name a few examples.

Tracing the historical development of islamophobia, he said that the word was coined by the Runnymede Commission in Britain in 1979, but that its roots date back to the Rashidun defeat of Byzantium, the First Crusade in 1099 and the Reconquista of Spain in 1492. The phenomenon was rekindled by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the invasion of Iraq in 1993 which he considered to be the final catastrophe.

However, Mr Mostyn noted that all was not lost since Sadiq Khan, a British Member of Parliament of Pakistani parentage, was about to be elected Mayor of London despite having being unjustly accused by a competitor of association with radical militants.

Mr. Mostyn summed up his speech by pointing out that the media rarely broadcasts the arguments of Muslim critics of violence and focus instead on polls that denigrate Muslims. How often, he asked, do we hear of books by Tariq Ramadan and Irshad Manji, Muslims seeking reform? Instead, we in the West are deeply influenced by

Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, writers whose bias against Islam is well known and who are loved by the neo-cons who caused so much misery in Iraq after 2003. Mr Mostyn quoted a recent poll showing that 78% of British Muslims are committed to Britain as their home, challenging the islamophobic fear that the loyalty of ordinary Muslims is to the ‘umma’, not the nation-state.



Action Plan

Mr. Roberto Savio, *Founder of Inter Press Service*, spoke of what was to be done. He suggested an action plan comprising three main points: raising a campaign, avoiding the trap of the clash of civilizations, and finally making alliances not only at the governmental and regional level but also most importantly with citizens.

Mr. Savio first elaborated on initiating a campaign in the West to show Europe that it was no longer the centre of the world, giving some data such as the fact that at the time of the Industrial Revolution Europe had 24% of the world population versus 4% at the end of this century. He claimed that in 2060 Europe would comprise 50 million people less, and thus it will no longer be what it used to be back in its heyday, as it is facing a serious shake- up and transformation.

Another example he brought to light was that of the Anglo-Chinese Opium wars 1839-60. He stated that the Chinese population was at the time 353.751 million people whereas Great Britain was only 21 million. Today Great Britain had 64 million people of which 8 million are foreign born and migrants while the Chinese are 1.5 billion. Thus, this generation is changing and there is need for a better education on this issue.

Mr. Savio said that this must be a time when European statesmen, are in a dire need, to realize that times are changing and that they cannot survive without immigrants; islamophobia had already engulfed migrant and refugee affairs. “Europe cannot survive with 50 million people less”, he said, adding later that Europe will not be like the dream of Le Pen and her ilks, A white European nation with best practice of the past would not come back. “We are campaigning for a better yesterday,” he said.

Mr. Savio thus detailed three points of action. Firstly, to engage in a campaign to raise awareness and explain to the West that they cannot live without refugees, a challenge to be faced with a strong policy of immigration.

Secondly, he warned to not fall into the trap of the clash of civilizations or of religions, saying that ISIS's dream is for the 21 million Muslims in Europe and 4 million in the United States to take a united stance in support of this criminal group. Those Muslims are finding themselves torn between the Western integration and defending their self-worth. A few end up joining DAESH. Mr. Savio said that the West is falling right into the trap of DAESH by rejecting Muslims as a whole without doing their research and developing their understanding of current trends. By continuing to discriminate against Muslims as a whole, they were creating marginalization that's already the recruitment plank of DAESH.

Thirdly, Mr. Savio proposed that it was essential to make alliances. The debate on Islam at the level of faith has long been ongoing. New alliances had to be made not only at governmental or regional level but also most importantly by including citizens in the debate. They had to go beyond the present structure considering this a serious transition phase. "We are living in a period of transition, but to where nobody knows," said *Mr. Savio*. He added that it was clear that the present system was no longer viable, and intellectual leaders needed to be working with citizens to discuss with them their own future and sense of security. Thus, inevitably would they come to accept to work together, referring to Mr. Diene's speech, by grounding a debate on values.

Mr. Savio stressed the word "values" that he said was a carry-over from the past. "Our peoples hate each other [...] Today fragmentation is the word [...] because "values" is a word out of use, a debate from the past, which is anyhow the basis of all the constitutions of the world. Today the debate about values has disappeared". Thus, there was a need to go back to values and to coexisting, by finding common values enabling peoples to live together. This can be done only with identifiable values. He concluded that by making this essential step, people will be side-tracking those who have a different agenda, which is not compatible with democracy and with values.

Debate

Several participants had comments and questions. First was **the Representative of the U.S Mission to Geneva** who thanked the organizers and speakers for this thought provoking discussion. He addressed first the topic of resolution 16/18 agreeing with its recognized importance to the Human Rights Council and all States. He pointed out that the main importance was for it to be carried out and implemented. In that regard, he mentioned the Istanbul Process and the importance of continuing and strengthening it. He also agreed that the Resolution 16/18 was a good compromise that gained consensus and recalled the statement of Mr. Ihsanoglu in regards moving from confrontation to cooperation.

The Representative of the United States then proceeded with three general remarks regarding first, the Clash of Civilizations and Huntington as an easy target to address what he called an Intellectual and Press flavor of the month in 1993 but it was not mainstream. He then commented on the presentation of the opposition to the older “defamation of religions” concept in resolution 16/18 and underlined it was not only based on the US First Amendment, saying there are a broader Human Rights based reasons which meant that a number of States were concerned with those approaches. Finally, commenting on the Panel being focused on the theme of the West and Islamophobia but not on the full scope of the issue worldwide, he said there were many examples of both intolerance and tolerance that came from different parts of the world thus the topic should be looked at in a more global spectrum.

The next participant, **Mrs. Fawzia Al Ashmawi**, *President of the Forum for European Muslim Women*, Representative of two NGOs the first being the Forum of European Muslim women and the Islamic Relief Organization for Saudi Arabia. She wanted to emphasize that Islamophobia really hits Muslim women in Europe, defending women covering their hair who are marginalized in terms of housing, job market, and naturalization processes. The 2nd point she highlighted was a support message she read from the International Organization of Islamic Relief of Saudi Arabia, concluding by speaking out against the restrictions imposed on some Islamic countries, and looking forward to working with United Nations to develop mechanisms to protect institutions in the Arab world so Muslims do not become victims of double standards.

The United Kingdom Representative emphasized that there was a need to broaden the discussion to all religious minorities as all societies have their challenges where rights were denied not only to Muslims, but also to Jews, Buddhists, Christians, amongst others. He went on saying it was not helpful to single out one religion when it comes to the topic of discrimination as he felt was the case in

this panel discussion. He also did not agree that islamophobia was only a Western phenomenon, claiming that interfaith discrimination occurred within Christianity and Islam amongst others. He said that it was the role of the Leaders of States to speak out against all discrimination. He used the example of the UK having a strong record of promoting religious tolerance and its commitment to implementing resolution 16/18, by regularly providing reports to the UN and having its own national action plan on this resolution. Thus the Representative asked the panelists what they would want to see political and religious leaders do to combat such type of violence and discrimination, and what were their suggestions in concrete terms to broaden the number of countries who have these actions plans.



Ms. Christina Kokkinakis, *Representing the European Union* first highlighted the concept of “Confrontation to Cooperation” deeming it highly relevant concerning resolution 16/18 and the Human Rights Council resolution 22/20 on the Freedom of Religion and Belief, saying they were results of excellent diplomatic work in the last 5 years. Her second point was regarding the scope of the panel and focus being on a single region of the West/Europe, evoking the necessity of a broader geographical consideration and the interest of listening to other regions, and to what they have done.

In this context she asked to give the floor to **Mr. David Frigeri**, *European Commission’s Policy Officer on Combatting Anti-Muslim Hatred -Brussels*, nominated December 2015, to present what the European Union does regarding this topic.

Mr. David Frigeri indicated that in October 2015 the European commission organized its first annual colloquium on fundamental rights dedicated to addressing two issues: anti-semitism and anti-Muslim hatred. Two coordinators were appointed to take on this challenging task and a full action plan was adopted by the European Commission. *Mr. Frigeri* underlined the focus put on four main themes: Education with the Paris declaration; Online Hate Speech in collaboration with major IT companies; Hate Crime in collaboration with the EU fundamental Rights Agency; and finally making sure that European non-discrimination legislation was fully implemented by EU member States, in addition to funding a number of projects

in the area. *Mr. Frigeri* finally expressed the political will to take this discussion forward and to make a clear statement to combat these phenomena.

The Representative of China followed by agreeing to the importance of the resolution 16/18. He highlighted two points. First the importance essentially of training, education and awareness raising especially towards youth regarding this issue. And secondly the role of media today and how to encourage the media and social media to play a positively leading role on developing the right mind -set for multiculturalism and tolerance of different religions and cultures.

The Representative of Indonesia also agreed to the need to implement and apply resolution 16/18 on the ground. He said that Indonesia has indeed implemented this resolution and that it is used as a reference document for local governments in Indonesia today. Concerning Geneva, it seemed, he said, that there was an opinion that resolution 16/18 is the end game, that it cannot be developed further for certain parties. Yet, he thought it should provide ground for development and not be an end result; referring to the example of *H. E. Prof. Dr. Ihsanoglu* regarding the Observatory of Islamophobia set up in the context of OIC to be a way forward. He concluded by asking the panelists what other ideas can come out of resolution 16/18 to enhance its substance, so as to have a bigger impact on the ground in terms of norms developed in Geneva.

Lastly, **H.E. Ambassador Saja Majali**, *Permanent Representative of Jordan Mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva* recalled: “Today we celebrate the HRC resolution 16/18 and reaffirm our commitment to freedom of religion and belief and expression, and to urge other states to take effective measures in combatting intolerance, discrimination, violence, based on religion”. She said they needed academies of peace to teach generations to dialogue, they needed to ensure singularities of branches are celebrated rather than become a cause of clashes and frictions, and they needed to move from confrontation to cooperation. She also suggested to put together all proposals put forward during the panel meeting and use the collective powers of alchemy, the international community’s shared values, and use this time of change that was referred to, so as to bring about convergence because what unites our shared humanity is much more than what divides us.

In this regard, she referred to Jordan’s initiative of resolution 65/5 that proclaimed the first week of each month of February to be observed by the General Assembly and encouraged this to spread the message of interfaith harmony and good will in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship. She explained that this resolution, initiated by King Abdallah the 2nd, is not specific to any monotheistic belief or religion but is meant to include all of them; it is simple, practical and inclusive and moves the discussion forward from conference

rooms into schools, offices, homes and lives through concrete activities. “These local initiatives are the ones we need”, she concluded.



H. E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu concluded that when the OIC first started the negotiation for the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, he never thought that there would come a time when the international community will celebrate the commemoration of the adoption of this resolution. He expressed his satisfaction after hearing the Western representatives constructively speaking about resolution 16/18, and recalled the strenuous steps that the negotiations went through before reaching final agreement on the adopted resolution.

Dr. *İhsanoğlu* said that this resolution is not restricted to Islam. It was drafted to include all other religions. He agreed with the UK representative on the fact that islamophobia is not only a Western phenomenon, yet Dr. *İhsanoğlu* affirmed that islamophobia started in the West. He pointed to the violations committed against Muslims in Myanmar, and said that he was surprised that violence and discrimination are practised under the name of “Buddhism”, which is known for its very peaceful teachings.

With reference to the discussion during the panel on S. Huntington book on “The Clash of Civilizations” he added that the effect of this book is exaggerated. Dr. *İhsanoğlu* emphasized the need to understand the political conditions that gave importance to Mr. Huntington’s book such as; the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the fear of the imbalance of power following the end of the bipolar system. According to him, Mr. Huntington’s main concern when he wrote the book “The Clash of Civilizations” was the preservation of the image of the West. Additionally, Dr. *İhsanoğlu* did not forget to underscore the importance of the implementation of resolution 16/18 at the local, regional and international level through follow up to the Istanbul declaration, the Istanbul process and the country reports presented. “Freedom of expression does not mean the freedom of insulting others”, is a statement that he has repeatedly used since 2005. It is now gaining more currency amongst Western countries and highest religious authorities in the Christian world, which highlights the progress attained in regard to this issue. Dr. *İhsanoğlu* finally asserted that the concrete intention to work together to resolve problems related

to discrimination, hatred and xenophobia was a turning point from confrontation to cooperation.

Mr. Doudou Diène concluded on the importance of the value of universality in combating Islamophobia. This phenomenon, he said, is not limited to Europe, but it is an issue of concern to all the continents. Islamophobia is particularly troublesome in Europe as it has a political dimension threatening its alleged democratic structure.

He continued by highlighting the importance of tackling the interreligious issues as a step towards addressing Islamophobia. *Mr. Diene* found it essential that Islam settles its own internal problems so that it is not feared internationally. Moreover, the prohibition of the incitement to hatred, he said, plays an indispensable role in making the implementation of resolution 16/18 successful.

Prof. Raphael Liogier replied to one of the questions posed by the participants that the “Clash of Civilization” is not an easy target to attack, stressing the point that he referred to earlier during his speech that it was not Huntington who coined this term. The concept dates back to a political school of the twenties of the last century, which differentiated between cultures. He said that fighting against similar political views is more important than fighting Huntington’s book.

Prof. Liogier agreed that the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 targets all minority groups besides Islam, yet the link to discrimination that is related to Islam has specific key characteristics which help recognizing it from other kinds of discrimination. The main characteristic amongst those is the question of intentions; bad intentions always prevail and this applies most particularly to Muslims in the West. A change in mind-sets on this issue would be a key element for resolving the phenomenon of islamophobia elsewhere and more broadly, all forms of discrimination and hatred directed against other religions or faith-based minorities.



Mr. Roberto Savio, explained that the media today are not any longer money-making structures, the large majority of media outlets being in deficit. This is creating a concentration of media and a homogeneity of content. The media now are becoming more and more commercially oriented and dependent on the market, therefore they need to use some marketing formulas based on events. Fifty years ago, there were nine image providers for all the media outlets worldwide. Today there are only two, which means that wherever we look we see the same images depending on pictures and not on words. Due to the lack of revenue and the homogeneity aspect of media, most of them are driven towards a more commercial focus. Islamophobia is a perfect catch for media and has all the elements that makes it a successful continuous commercial event. An effective policy according to him in dealing with such a dilemma would be to work with the international media through forming new alliances with grassroots information sources through electronic and social media.

Ambassador Tehmina Janjua pointed once again to the language distortion problem, pleading against the use of “loaded words such as “Islamic terrorism”, or “Islamic violence”, as there exist no religion that incites to terrorism or violence. She also urged the international community to stop using the acronym ISIL “Islamic State” and to use the word DAESH instead, so as to stop relinking violence to Islam which has nothing to do with such behaviours. Education and social media are extremely important, as only 40% of the youth use media, referring to *Mr. Savio’s* statistics. She added that all characters used in cartoons need to be prejudice-free in order to stop passing on systematic discriminatory and prejudiced messages to our children.

H. E. Dr. Hanif Al Qassim, in his closing remarks, informed all participants and stakeholders that the centre plans to organise a follow up meeting focusing on the same theme. He stressed once again the central role that media and education play in clearing up all misunderstandings and stereotyping perceived worldwide about Muslims and Islam.



**DRAWING LESSONS FROM
THE PANEL MEETING**

Prejudice towards or discrimination against people on account of their religion and beliefs is a mounting phenomenon worldwide. The rise of this phenomenon is posing a growing threat to social peace, harmony and the coexistence of different cultures throughout the world.

No society is exempt from some form of xenophobia, which can constitute a threat to peace and security.

There is a need to promote more inclusive societies worldwide. The tidal wave of depersonalized global messages and of the increased mobility of persons will trigger defensive reactions including the search for resuscitating identities from the mythical past.

Minorities are particularly threatened in this process, whether in Western societies, in the Arab region, in different parts of Asia or in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights has strongly asserted that all such threats to the full enjoyment of human rights are a cause for equal concern and need to be investigated, and the Geneva Centre wishes to be associated to the search for improving the situation of all minorities.

Islamophobia is only the first in a series of society phobias to which the Centre will revert. Selection of this theme does not therefore in any way imply that it takes precedence over others.

The first time the term “Islamophobia” was introduced as a concept in modern history was in the early 1980’s in the Runnymede Trust Report. It was defined as “unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims.” The term was coined in the context of Muslims in the UK in particular and Europe in general, and formulated based on the more common “xenophobia” framework. However, the phenomenon as implied by the term was previously part of the Western social and intellectual scene.

The September 11th episode and the “War on Terror” have negatively impacted Muslims all over the world and most significantly the Muslim minorities living in the West, and Islamophobia had become worse as a result.

One of the major steps taken at an international level to address and counter this particular form and other worrying forms of xenophobic expressions was the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 in 2011 which calls for “combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and

discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief”.

The panel on Islamophobia and the implementation of HRC resolution 16/18 was organised at the Palais des Nations by the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue under the auspices of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations office in Geneva to commemorate the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18. The discussion provided a unique opportunity for bringing together some distinguished thinkers and decision-makers on the world scene to address this issue and provide a rational analysis of some of the significant root causes of Islamophobia. The Geneva Centre had the privilege to host one of the master minds who played a pivotal role in promoting the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18; H.E. Professor Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Former Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and currently Member of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Turkish Parliament, and Member of the Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe.

I Islamophobia as a form of racism

The argument that Muslims are not a race and that Islamophobia cannot thus be racism was challenged. It is true that Muslims are not a race as the majority of Muslims are not Arabs, and not all Arabs are Muslims.

It was proven by scientists long ago that race is not a biological reality but it is rather a socially constructed concept, and in most cases it is politically motivated by dominant groups in societies. Hence, racism is no longer about colour but it is about culture, and people are being threatened because of their practices and beliefs. This is confirmed by the Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, which refers to discrimination “against persons based on religion or belief”.

Islamophobia is not only an expression of religious intolerance, but it has become a contemporary form of racism. The 2001 Durban declaration clearly classified Islamophobia as a form of racism and showed its concern about the emergence of racial movements based on discriminatory ideas against Muslims.

The dynamics of multiculturalism in societies nowadays are challenging the traditional pillars for constructing national identity such as: religion, race and culture. This in turn is generating identity crises, which nurture the rise of racism in general and Islamophobia in particular. Islamophobia is thus an ideological and political expression of resistance to the evolving construct of identity. However, expressions and acts of behaviourism that imply ethnic, racial or religious hatred may eventually harm any harmonious societal structure.

II Drawing a distinction between legitimate criticism and disagreement towards any religion on one hand, and unfounded prejudice and hostility such as Islamophobia, on the other hand.

Keeping the religion of Islam immune from criticism is unwarranted and dangerous. However, mainstreaming prejudice and the frequent conflation between acts of people coming from a Muslim background , who are not necessarily religious and may even instrumentalize Islam for shameful purposes, and Islam itself fuel islamophobia.

Criticism that is based on facts and evidence is a constructive process that stimulates thinking and leads to enlightened conclusions. However, since criticism of religion is mainly based on intuition and opinion, it may sometimes be misjudged and lead to the wrong conclusions.

All monotheistic religions have some sacred or holy texts. They provide guidance for their followers to interpret ideas and actions. From these, religious authorities derive norms for how people ought to live and act in the world. However, the sacred texts are often of general character, and may require interpretation. These interpretations may be correct or not, as they may either be adapted or not adapted to a given era or society. That however is not a reason to defame the core principles and rules of any religion.

Islam has repeatedly been a victim of defamation on account of criminal acts perpetrated by individuals and groups who claim to be the servants of Islamic faith but who are in reality misusing this religion to legitimize their crimes.

This is leading to conflation between Islam and terrorism, thus creating panic about this religion further exacerbated by fear-mongering to serve the interests of populist parties in the West. One of its side-effects is to create tension between religions despite the fact that all Abrahamic faiths are complementary the Gospel being continuation of the Old Testament and Islam claiming to complete the same Abrahamic message.

III Discerning the underlying factors responsible for islamophobia

Understanding the genesis of islamophobia makes it possible to contain it more effectively. Islamophobia has historical roots but present day islamophobia results from a succession of crises. A surgical dissection of Islamophobia, its origins and uses, is required in order to remove the hatred and fear that is exploited by extremists and populist parties alike. The main factors that assisted in increasing islamophobia are:

a. External intervention: The repeated international interventions in Muslim countries has created a social vacuum with the breakdown of conflict resolution mechanisms,

which led to an exacerbation of extremism.

b. Political extremism: The adoption of specific policies in many Western countries reinforced political extremism. Such is the case for the rightist parties that nurtured islamophobic sentiments, the hatred of the other, and undermined the cohesion of society in the West. Consequently, Muslims living in Western countries are caught between Islamophobia on the one hand, and violent extremism on the other, and have to pay the highest price from such conflicting extremes. The far right and the well-funded Islamophobic network have espoused racist ideas for some time now, but the danger of their phobic language is that it is spilling over into mainstream politics for electoral purposes.

VI Delineating the boundaries between the freedom of expression and opinion, and the freedom of religion and belief.

Media play an essential role in the evolution of Islamophobic sentiments. Traditional media are eager to cover controversial material of this kind (“if it does not bleed, it does not lead”), it does because it draws larger audiences at a time when they suffer from loss of leadership as a result of the attraction of electronic press. The latter itself is no more subjected to any code of ethics.

Media can equally be used to promote peace and understanding, or to incite act of violence, xenophobia and related intolerance. Some less responsible media have thus distorted and misrepresented Islam as a religion of violence and depicted Muslims in the public discourse as villains. This ignores the fact that Muslims are by far the most numerous victims of terrorism. Moreover, freedom of expression granted to western media is alleged to be absolute and immediate with limited concerns for the infringement on the rights of others. The right to freedom of religion and belief is part of the freedom of opinion. Only the latter and not the freedom of expression could be absolute.

Media have a major role to play in the pursuit of global peace, and this requires awareness promotion, an “unpacking” of contemporary phobic language and commitment of the State to respect the dignity and faith of all its citizens.

V The misuse of words and the intellectual legitimacy have exacerbated the anti- Islamic discourse

Much attention must be devoted to the dangers of the misuse and misinterpretation of language, which may lead to the conflation between Islam and terrorism, and therefore result in increasing feelings of hatred towards Islam, and Muslims. The word “Jihad”, for instance, which is the most widespread misused concept in relation to Islam means exertion, or effort. “Greater Jihad” as defined by Islam is the exertions of Muslims to overcome their sins. “The lesser Jihad” is the exercise

of self- defence as enshrined also by the Charter of the United Nations.

Distorting the use of such expressions to cover heinous crimes leads to the legitimisation of racism through using such intellectual discourse imbued with off-the-peg built in islamophobia in order to influence general opinion. Samuel Huntington's famous piece on the clash of civilization, which boils down in fact to a clash of ignorance, illustrates a good example for planting the idea of intolerance in the minds of future generations.

VI Concluding recommendations

Religious intolerance is a central concern of enlightened statesmanship in a democratic society.

Concern stems from the unforeseen consequences that may occur when such intolerance propagates in multicultural societies, and from the dangers of fragmentation caused when intolerance is given a free rein in the name of freedom of expression.

Heavy responsibility lies on the shoulders of politicians. There are different views on how to effectively combat islamophobia. There are overlapping points of analysis about the causes of islamophobia. These differences must be analysed because they inform the way in which responses to islamophobia should be devised.

State policies must aim at creating societies where diversity is respected and where the source of respect stems from values based on basic human rights. The promotion of the value of interculturalism in societies could be achieved by nourishing diversity with unity.

Initiating a global dialogue on how to engage with the increasing trend of vilification of Islam and its followers should be within any action plan that each State has to implement to deter racist and xenophobic acts.

Emphasis must be put on education and the creation of institutions that teach future generations the culture of peace and dialogue. Such is the case for instance of the pilot schools set up in Bahrain on "Citizenship and Human Rights".

We must realise that the future in international peace and security depends very much on the establishment of constructive relations between Islam and the West on the basis of mutual benefits and common good.

Therefore, Muslim leaders and decision-makers in the Islamic world must not limit their scope of work to containing islamophobia and condemning acts of terrorism perpetrated using Islam as a pretext. They must **first** of all work towards a rejection of all forms of discrimination whether, effective or perceived, in their own nation. They must **secondly** rectify all expressions assisting in entrenching

faulty concepts about Islam in the minds of the general public.

Thirdly, decision makers in the Muslim world must also summon all their efforts to continue striving to criminalize islamophobic manifestations in all international fora that are likely to lead to violence. This could be achieved through lobbying for drafting more documents and resolutions containing paragraphs condemning islamophobia in a manner similar to the way anti-Semitism is condemned by the Council of Europe.

Fourthly, all States should adopt a periodic plan of action to implement Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 including Western and Arab States.

Fifthly, religious dialogue both between Islamic schools and between Islam and other monotheistic religions will be a precious antidote to the islamophobic poison.

Such an approach will help challenging the conspiracy of the “Islamization of the Western World” which is nothing but a myth that has been instrumentalized to instill fear from, and rejection of, Muslims. Governments in predominantly Islamic States must also encourage cooperation with their counterparts in the Western World in order to analyse and work on improving some policies that lead some Muslims youngsters living in the West to be drawn to violent extremism, which in turn encourages distorting the image of Islam in the eyes of the Western society.

Finally, States must facilitate the work of respected religious figures, advocates of tolerance such as Pope Francis for Christianity and the Imam of al Azahar for Sunni Islam and representatives of all other religions and beliefs in the pursuit of spreading the message of peace and strengthening the concept of social harmony within and between nation States.

Foreign military operations added to inappropriate governance and democratic deficits in the MENA region have unleashed extremist violence which has spilled over in the West. This in turn has nurtured the rise of identitarian populism and xenophobia already kindled by the "pauperisation of the middle classes". Rolling back the rise of intolerance in such a context will be an arduous task. The forthcoming elections in the Netherlands, France, and Germany, and the constitutional referendum in Italy could make this task even more challenging. But it is in such uncertain times that leadership to advance human rights is most needed.

ANNEX I
FULL STATEMENTS OF PANEL MEMBERS

Intrinsic Values of Islam that Preach Love and Peace

Statement of H.E. Dr. Hanif Al Qassim

Chairman of the Geneva Centre's Board of Management

Excellencies, Honorable Guests, Distinguished Panelists and Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to open this panel discussion on Islamophobia on behalf of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue. The Panel is organized with valued support from the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Office in Geneva to whom I would like to extend my deepest appreciation and indeed gratitude.

We are assembled today to reach out to public opinion and to warn against the worrying spread of extremist ideologies begotten by an increasing polarization along cultural and religious lines at world level in these times of economic crisis. We are challenged to suggest ways to contain this woeful trend through enhancing tolerance and dialogue.

This present event is planned to coincide with, and to commemorate, the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Human Rights Council Resolution 16\18 *on Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping and Stigmatization of, and Discrimination, Incitement to Violence and Violence against, Persons based on Religion or Belief.*

The resolution was intended to reinforce the existing mechanisms for fighting wanton behaviour and attitudes based on racist, ethnic, religious and cultural prejudices. Will this resolution provide, inter alia, an effective antidote to the poison of "Islamophobia", which currently constitutes a threat to global peace?

"Islamophobia" promotes irrational fear and suspicion of Islam and feeds on attitudes of racist aversion from everything related to the Islamic and Arabic cultures. Yet Islam carries a specific message of harmony, bringing people closer together through its advocacy of tolerance and fraternity. This is indicated in the following Quranic verse:

قال تعالى في سورة الحجرات، الآية 31

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ صدق الله العظيم

“O mankind! We have created you from male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may get to know one another. The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the most pious.” (*Surat Alhujurat 49:13*)

The verse explains the purpose for which God created us with different backgrounds. This is to give us an opportunity to meet and to benefit, and learn from one another. Moreover, the verse implies that cultural and religious diversity are preconditions for peace and stability.

Conflating Islam’s intrinsic values that preach love and peace with unscrupulous deeds practiced by groups instrumentalizing Islam in the pursuit of violence and power, is the foundation for anti-Islamic prejudice. Were the ruthless terrorist members of the so called “Lord’s Resistance Army” in Uganda ever referred to in the international press as representing Christianity in the same way that DAECH or BOKO HARAM are now claimed to be allegedly “Islamic”?

Such misconceptions lead to the incitement of hatred towards Muslims and the Islamic culture. The unfounded and shallow prejudice based on faulty assumptions about Muslims and Islam are major obstacles to greater international harmony between cultures and civilizations.

Esponsing such attitudes and views is tantamount to providing credence to Samuel Huntington’s hypothesis of the “Clash of Civilization”. This work posits that the primary axis of conflict in the future will be along cultural and religious lines.

Islamophobia targets Muslims worldwide. However, its repercussions mostly affect Muslims who live in the West. The prejudice against Islam also affects the Arab non-Muslim communities who live in the West. Being ethnically characterised as Arabs exposes them to the same stereotyping.

Islamophobia claims political correctness in the West. It creates frustrations within the Western minority groups and anger in particular among the youth of Muslim extraction whose right to dignity is being denied. Anger spreads across borders and extends to Muslim lands undermining the benefits of interdependence through trade expansion, financial flows, and cultural exchange.

In the pursuit of tolerance, media have an essential role to play for the sake of global peace. Are they playing it? How can ignorance be dispelled and our common humanity be rediscovered? How can we reach out better to people of good will?

Can one in the same breath condemn anti-Semitism and condone Islamophobia in the name of freedom of expression?

We Muslims plead for greater tolerance in the West for our communities and we recommit ourselves also to practice it ever more at home for these are the true teachings of Islam.

There is indeed a specific verse in the Quran in Surat Al-Ankabut (The Spider) verse no.46, which addresses Muslims in their relations to Christians and Jews as follows:

قال تعالى في سورة العنكبوت، الآية 46

﴿وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ صدق الله العظيم

(And say we believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one: and we are all submitted to him). (*Surat Al-Ankabut 29:46*)

Finally, I am confident that with the contribution of our illustrious keynote speaker and with the help of our distinguished panelists, this meeting will offer yet another platform to reach out to people of all creeds and beliefs as well as to people with none with the ultimate objective of eradicating racism based on the defamation of Muslims. Thank you all for taking part in this event, and may peace be upon you.

Islamophobia is Delinked from the Biological – Ethnic Connotations of Racism

Statement of H. E. Ambassador Tehmina Janjua

Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva

Great pleasure to be part of this important event. Thanks to the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue (GCHRAGD), especially to its Chairman, Dr. Hanif Hassan Ali Al Qassim, for organizing today's event. We have very distinguished panelists with us today.

I look forward to benefitting from the views of the panelists.

I will, very briefly, share a few thoughts on some aspects of Islamophobia, which arise quite often in the deliberations on this phenomena in various UN fora.

First, let me recall that the original resolution that was the precursor to resolution 16/18, first introduced by the OIC in the then Human Rights Commission, was deliberately placed under the agenda item dealing with racism, racial discrimination and intolerance, to underscore the fact that the phenomena of Islamophobia went far beyond just religious intolerance. It manifested in deeper ways. And, therefore, Islamophobia came to be defined as a contemporary form of racism. Of course, Muslims are not a race. Indeed the whole validity of the concept of "race", as a biological and ethnic category, is quite doubtful. But, the notion of racism is valid in the case of Islamophobia when defined as "the belief that there are human groups with particular characteristics that make them superior or inferior to other", and that an individual's traits are predetermined by virtue of his/her belonging to a particular group. Hence, racism here is about systematic denigration of a "group", in this case Muslims, and of active hostility towards it. It is to be de-linked from the biological/ethnic connotations of "racism".

Second, how are we to make the distinction between justified criticism of a group of people and their beliefs from hostile and prejudiced comments? This takes us into a more general discussion about free speech. The useful background note for this event points out that international human rights law acknowledges that freedom of expression can be restricted in certain cases, especially when it endangers others or negatively impacts on their ability to enjoy their rights. An absolutist position on free speech is questioned in the face of the most vile, most inflammatory assertions that are made and printed against Muslims and Islam. After all international human rights law places some limitations in this regard.

Third, is there even an understanding of the gravity of the situation? When we speak of Islamophobia are we dealing with some random incidents of hate speech, and violence against a few individuals? Or are we witnessing the emergence of a pervasive climate of rank prejudice, hostility and discrimination? I think we would all agree that it is the latter. But this realization may not be shared by many. This should be a matter of concern. In our view, prejudice against Muslims and Islam is becoming mainstream. What was unacceptable even a few years back is becoming part of normal discourse. Leading politicians pander to the basest sentiments. Sections of mass media amplify messages of intolerance and hate. All this needs to be carefully monitored, systematically documented and actively shared with a general populace. If not, we risk reverting to a period reminiscent of the early 20th century Europe.

Fourth, how are we to have a more balanced discussion of the causes of Islamophobia? In the West, the dominant view appears to be that prejudice towards Muslims is a response to the extremism and violence emanating from groups that justify their actions in Islamic terms. And, that the real problem is within Muslim countries, and even within Islam. This ready conflation of extremism and violence with Muslims and Islam is dangerous, and simply wrong. It needs to be countered by a deeper analysis. The significant role of repeated external interventions in Muslim countries and meddlesome policies in provoking extremism responses needs to be brought out and acknowledged. At the same time, the myth of a monolithic intolerant Islam – resistant to inquiry, debate and criticism- needs to be dispelled. Islam has a rich heritage of questioning and dissent. Authors, poets, mystics and theologians have engaged in vigorous discussions and have presented different visions of religion. (Shikwa, Jawa-e-Shikwa). This tradition continues, but is willfully ignored in accounts seeking to demonize Islam.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure on these, and many other points, we shall, collectively, benefit from the knowledge and insights of our distinguished panelists. And with greater understanding of these issues, we shall be able to counter the evil of Islamophobia in a more effective manner.

Thank You.

Human Rights Council and Resolution 16/18

Statement of H. E. Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu

Former-Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

After years of intense and often heated negotiations, the OIC Member States, the European Union, United States and other stakeholders have reached an agreement in 2011 to unify their efforts to address some of the significant root causes of radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism.

The historic Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, the fifth anniversary of which we are commemorating, is the outcome of such global determination.

The HRC Res. 16/18 was adopted by consensus both at the Human Rights Council in Geneva and by the General Assembly in New York in 2011.

It is an important legal tool as it not only helps diminish root causes of radicalization, marginalization and alienation, but also provides guidance in tailoring our efforts in such a way that those very efforts would not further instigate radicalism and violence.

The story of this resolution goes back more than a decade ago. In 1999, at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, member states of the OIC proposed a resolution entitled “Combating Defamation of Religions”.

The rationale behind this resolution was to start a global dialogue on how to engage with the increasing trend of vilification of Islam and its adherents.

Later on, rightfully, the scope and content of this resolution has been improved as to include provisions that would address the increasing harassments against Christians, Jews and other faith communities.

In essence, the “Combating Defamation of Religions” resolution deplored “the use of print, audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet, and of any other means to incite acts of violence, xenophobia or related intolerance and discrimination towards Islam or any religions”.

Moreover, the resolution urged all the UN member states “to provide, within their respective legal and constitutional systems, adequate protection against acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from the defamation of any religion”.

So, the resolution called for necessary arrangements, not against criticism of Islam or any other religion, but against the acts of hatred, discrimination, and violence that may result from defamations of religions and demonization of their adherents,

which applied to Jews, Christians, Muslims and other faiths equally.

However, this resolution on combating defamation of religions received two kinds of reaction. One was a criticism of the resolution's content, on the grounds that it was contradicting the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

Apparently, the First Amendment prohibits among others, making of any law abridging the freedom of speech.

Therefore, those who held this view opposed the adoption of this resolution at both the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and the UN General Assembly in New York.

The other critics of the resolution simply sought to exploit the resolution, through a fabricated interpretation of it, in order to perpetuate an already existing fear about Islam and the Muslims' alleged "invasion" of the West.

The commonality between these two kinds of reactions was the deliberate portrayal of the resolution as an attempt to criminalize the criticism of Islam, and as such an assault on the freedom of expression.

Nevertheless, the continued discrimination, hatred, and incitement to violence on the basis of religions or beliefs across the world, required finding a middle ground that would address these ills.

The developments such as the publication of infamous Danish cartoons in September 2005, and violent demonstrations it sparked warranted that the issue at stake was not just rhetorical, discursive or intellectual, but practical with real consequences.

While condemning the publication, I also categorically rejected the so-called calls for death of the cartoonist.

At the same time, I reached out to then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and EU High Representative Javier Solana, expressed them the gravity of Muslims' reactions to the cartoons, and conveyed to them the expectations of the Muslim world.

Based on these contacts, and upon our initiative, a joint statement of the UN and OIC Secretaries General and the EU High Representative was issued in New York, Brussels and Jeddah.

The statement, while condemning the violence, described the cartoons as "insulting" and "offensive", and emphasized that freedom of expression entailed responsibility and discretion, and should respect the beliefs and tenets of all religions.

The statement also affirmed that there was an urgent need for renewed dialogue.

Moreover, in order to bridge the gap among the stakeholders and move from years-long confrontation to cooperation on the subject, during the 15th Session of UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in September 2010, I proposed eight points that would restructure our approach to the subject.

This initiative was a turning point for the ongoing international negotiations on the freedom of speech and prevention of incitement to hatred.

My eight-point approach comprised the following:

1. Encouraging the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promoting dialogue and inspiring constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education;
2. Creating an appropriate mechanism within governments to, inter alia, identify and address potential areas of tension between members of different religious communities, and assisting with conflict prevention and mediation;
3. Encouraging training of government officials in effective outreach strategies;
4. Encouraging the efforts of leaders to discuss within their communities the causes of discrimination and evolving strategies to counter these causes;
5. Speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;
6. Adopting measures to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief;
7. Understanding the need to combat denigration and negative religious stereotyping of persons, as well as incitement to religious hatred, by strategizing and harmonizing actions at local, national, regional and international levels through, inter alia, education and awareness- building;
8. Recognizing that the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as inter- religious and inter-cultural dialogue at local, national and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence.

I am pleased to note with satisfaction that most stakeholders received these proposals quite favorably.

For example, acknowledging the importance of the eight points towards building a consensus, then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserted that it was time to overcome the false divide that pits religious sensitivities against freedom of expression and to pursue a new approach based on concrete steps to fight intolerance wherever it occurs.

Consequently, the OIC member states, the US, the EU member states and other partners have worked out a new resolution.

And the result was the HRC Resolution 16/18 “Combating religious intolerance and negative stereotypes, stigmatization, discrimination, and incitement to violence, and violence against individuals based on religion or belief”, adopted by consensus in 2011 both at the UN Human Rights Council and in the UN General Assembly.

In July 2012, Secretary of State Madam Hillary Clinton, EU High Representative Madam Catherine Ashton and I, along with other stakeholders launched the Istanbul Process in order to promote implementation of the HRC 16/18 by more and more countries.

This resolution has provided the states with universally accepted criteria and guidance in order to deal with the issue of hate speech, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, namely most of the factors that lead to radicalization, extremism and violence.

In a sense, it has shown the states a way as to how to diminish, if not completely eliminate, these negative factors which had been breeding radicalism as a precursor to violent extremism and terrorism.

As such, the HRC Res. 16/18 remains by far the most significant tool that can help the international community both diminish root causes of radicalization, marginalization and alienation.

It is also the most significant tool to address Islamophobia as it provides a holistic approach to protecting not just Muslims, but all individuals against stereotyping, discrimination, and incitement to violence on the basis of their religion or belief.

At this point, what needs to be done as a way forward is quite clear and simple. Basically, all Member States, primarily OIC Member States, should strive to implement the HRC 16/18 to highest extend possible.

They should also streamline it into other tracks, which the international community is pursuing, and the most notable two of which are respectively the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and the implementation of the UN Secretary General’s

recently released plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

As we near June when the UN General Assembly will review the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, the OIC Member States should strive to have the HRC 16/18 highlighted in the Strategy as a means to fulfill the Pillar I (Measures to eliminate conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism).

By the same token, while implementing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which itself is considered complementary to the Pillar I, all Member States should utilize the guidelines provided in the HRC 16/18 as a means to counter discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization and stereotyping of individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

A Social Alchemy

Statement of H. E. Mr. Idriss Jazairy

Resident Board Member of the Geneva Centre

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of Civil Society Organisations and of the Media,

I thank our Distinguished Chairman, HE Dr Hanif Al Qassim and Her Excellency Ambassador Tehmima Janjua for their inspiring remarks at the opening of this Panel.

Our encounter today offers us a unique opportunity to bring together some of the most distinguished thinkers and decision-makers concerning the issue of Islamophobia on the world scene, hailing from both the Global North as well and the Global South. And so it should be as racism and intolerance whether based on ethnicity, culture or beliefs is an affront to world civilisations at large and not only to those targeted.

This panel is about social alchemy: the alchemy which can transform the theme of Islamophobia from being a source of confrontation predicated on fear of diversity into an agenda for cooperative action. Action by consensus, based on the recognition of the commonality of the challenge for all. Action based also on our shared interest in forsaking the interrelated demons of racism we mistakenly thought we had brought under control after WWII.

We could have a no more appropriate keynote speaker and guest of honour to express this vision than HE Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Member of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Turkish Parliament, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and former Secretary-General of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation. Not only because of these prestigious functions that he occupied or occupies but also because he was the alchemist who helped transform the issue of islamophobia from a source of confrontation into one of cooperation. I also remember the central role played by the Obama Administration in this regard. Thus emerged Resolution 16/18 on Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence against, persons based on religion or belief, a resolution whose adoption 5 years ago we are commemorating.

The members of the Panel are outstanding intellectuals and activists equally divided between North and South and who have acquired world recognition for being equally united in consensus building on the ways of addressing this contemporary manifestation of racism.

To move from the Ivory Tower of the UN and reach out to the people, we depend on the media. We are blessed with the presence today of the best the media can offer in the pursuit of truth, in the shaping of a more equitable world in which the new generations really feel they have a stake.

I will introduce Members of the Panel when giving them the floor.

So we should be well armed today to reach out to real people, those who frame destiny on Earth, “We the People...”.

**ANNEX II
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
RESOLUTION 16/18**



Human Rights Council

Sixteenth session

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
form of intolerance, follow-up and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action****Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council*****16/18****Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and
stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence
and violence against, persons based on religion or belief***The Human Rights Council,*

Reaffirming the commitment made by all States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to, inter alia, religion or belief,

Reaffirming also the obligation of States to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and to implement measures to guarantee the equal and effective protection of the law,

Reaffirming further that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides, inter alia, that everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, which shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching,

Reaffirming the positive role that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can play in strengthening democracy and combating religious intolerance,

Deeply concerned about incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence against persons based on their religion or belief in all regions of the world,

* The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council will be contained in the report of the Council on its sixteenth session (A/HRC/16/2), chap. I.

A/HRC/RES/16/18

Deplores any advocacy of discrimination or violence on the basis of religion or belief,

Strongly deploring all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief, as well as any such acts directed against their homes, businesses, properties, schools, cultural centres or places of worship,

Concerned about actions that wilfully exploit tensions or target individuals on the basis of their religion or belief,

Noting with deep concern the instances of intolerance, discrimination and acts of violence in many parts of the world, including cases motivated by discrimination against persons belonging to religious minorities, in addition to the negative projection of the followers of religions and the enforcement of measures that specifically discriminate against persons on the basis of religion or belief,

Recognizing the valuable contribution of people of all religions or beliefs to humanity and the contribution that dialogue among religious groups can make towards an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

Recognizing also that working together to enhance implementation of existing legal regimes that protect individuals against discrimination and hate crimes, increase interfaith and intercultural efforts, and to expand human rights education are important first steps in combating incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence against individuals on the basis of religion or belief,

1. *Expresses deep concern* at the continued serious instances of derogatory stereotyping, negative profiling and stigmatization of persons based on their religion or belief, as well as programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at creating and perpetuating negative stereotypes about religious groups, in particular when condoned by Governments;

2. *Expresses its concern* that incidents of religious intolerance, discrimination and related violence, as well as of negative stereotyping of individuals on the basis of religion or belief, continue to rise around the world, and condemns, in this context, any advocacy of religious hatred against individuals that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and urges States to take effective measures, as set forth in the present resolution, consistent with their obligations under international human rights law, to address and combat such incidents;

3. *Condemns* any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audio-visual or electronic media or any other means;

4. *Recognizes* that the open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue, at the local, national and international levels can be among the best protections against religious intolerance and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious hatred, and convinced that a continuing dialogue on these issues can help overcome existing misperceptions;

5. *Notes* the speech given by Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the fifteenth session of the Human Rights Council, and draws on his call on States to take the following actions to foster a domestic environment of religious tolerance, peace and respect, by:

(a) Encouraging the creation of collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promoting dialogue and inspiring constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education;

(b) Creating an appropriate mechanism within Governments to, inter alia, identify and address potential areas of tension between members of different religious communities, and assisting with conflict prevention and mediation;

(c) Encouraging training of Government officials in effective outreach strategies;

(d) Encouraging the efforts of leaders to discuss within their communities the causes of discrimination, and evolving strategies to counter these causes;

(e) Speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;

(f) Adopting measures to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief;

(g) Understanding the need to combat denigration and negative religious stereotyping of persons, as well as incitement to religious hatred, by strategizing and harmonizing actions at the local, national, regional and international levels through, inter alia, education and awareness-building;

(h) Recognizing that the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence;

6. *Calls upon* all States:

(a) To take effective measures to ensure that public functionaries in the conduct of their public duties do not discriminate against an individual on the basis of religion or belief;

(b) To foster religious freedom and pluralism by promoting the ability of members of all religious communities to manifest their religion, and to contribute openly and on an equal footing to society;

(c) To encourage the representation and meaningful participation of individuals, irrespective of their religion, in all sectors of society;

(d) To make a strong effort to counter religious profiling, which is understood to be the invidious use of religion as a criterion in conducting questionings, searches and other law enforcement investigative procedures;

7. *Encourages* States to consider providing updates on efforts made in this regard as part of ongoing reporting to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

8. *Calls upon* States to adopt measures and policies to promote the full respect for and protection of places of worship and religious sites, cemeteries and shrines, and to take measures in cases where they are vulnerable to vandalism or destruction;

9. *Calls for* strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs, and decides to convene a panel discussion on this issue at its seventeenth session, within existing resources.

46th meeting

24 March 2011

[Adopted without a vote.]



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