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# General Assembly

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Sixty-sixth General Assembly  
Third Committee  
44<sup>th</sup> Meeting (AM)

The Committee next turned to the draft resolution on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence against persons, based on religion or belief (document A/C.3/66/L.47/Rev.1), which was introduced by the representative of the United Arab Emirates, on behalf of the OIC.

In the draft text, the Assembly would reaffirm 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. It would also strongly deplore all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief, as well as all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines in violation of international law, in particular human rights law and international humanitarian law, including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments.

In that regard, the Assembly would welcome all international, regional and national initiatives aimed at promoting interreligious, intercultural and interfaith harmony and combating discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or belief. It would also condemn any advocacy of religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

The Assembly would call upon all States to take effective measures to ensure that public functionaries do not discriminate against an individual on the basis of religion or belief; 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; and 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.

The representative of Poland, on behalf of the European Union, said it firmly believed in freedom of expression and thought based on religion and belief. An ongoing dialogue about those important issues was the only way to overcome existing divergences and opinions, and the European Union remained firmly committed to that dialogue. The regional body welcomed the positive atmosphere in which those issues had been discussed, but would like to highlight those making dialogue were individuals and that each individual had multiple sources of identity. Religious hatred was primarily a threat to individual freedoms at national and local levels, and the European Union was concerned that the resolution considered the world as monolithic religious blocks. The European Union condemned attacks on religious sites, but also believed the protection of individuals must be the centre of attention. All persons belonging to religious communities and minorities should be allowed to practice their religion freely, without

religions intolerance. The resolution specifically mentions one centre for interreligious dialogue, whereas there were numerous centres around the world. Despite those issues, the Members of the European Union were in a position to join consensus, he said.

The representative of the United States said his country was pleased to join the consensus on the resolution, which it hoped would be a blueprint for further action. The United States was glad that the landmark consensus achieved at the Council in Geneva was also reached here in New York — it was deeply concerning that those problems persisted all over the world. In the past, the United States was not able to support such resolutions, because they sought to restrict expression, which was counterproductive and exacerbated the problems they sought to address. The resolution adopted today provided for criminalization in only one circumstance: incitement of imminent violence. It upheld respect for universal human rights, and each Members State had much work to do to turn actions recommended in this resolution into reality.

The Committee then approved the draft resolution by consensus.

Speaking after adoption of the resolution, the representative of the United Arab Emirates said it was with great satisfaction that the OIC thanked Members for their consensus. It was a very positive development that they were happily working towards fulfilling the objectives of the resolution, which also complemented other General Assembly resolutions.

Australia's representative said his delegation was very pleased to co-sponsor the inaugural resolution, which was directly important to his country. In a country as hugely diverse as Australia, any violence was a direct threat to the health of the society itself. Nationally, Australia was trying to ensure that everyone could celebrate and practice their religions free from discrimination. This year Australia had also launched a new multicultural policy, which it took very seriously, and was negotiating a practical joint programme of cooperation with the OIC. It commended the OIC for its historic achievement.

Turning towards the draft resolution on elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief (document A/C.3/66/L.48/Rev.1), which was introduced by Poland's representative on behalf of the European Union, the Committee approved that text.

By its terms, the Assembly would be deeply concerned at continuing acts of intolerance and violence based on religion or belief against individuals and members of religious communities and religious minorities around the world and at the limited progress made in the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. The Assembly would, therefore, recognize that further intensified efforts were needed to promote and protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief and to eliminate all forms of hatred, intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, as also noted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001, as well as at the Durban Review Conference, held in Geneva from 20 to 24 April 2009.

The Assembly would also strongly condemn all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief, as well as violations of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief. It would stress that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief applies equally to all persons, regardless of their religion or belief and without any discrimination as to their equal protection by the law. It would also strongly condemn 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.

The Assembly would urge States to step up their efforts to protect and promote freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, and urge all Governments to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on freedom of religion and belief. It would request the Secretary-General to ensure that the Special Rapporteur receives the resources necessary to fully discharge his mandate, and would request the Special Rapporteur to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. It would also decide to consider the question of the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance at its sixty-seventh session under the item entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights".