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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Seventeenth session
Item 4 of the agenda

Draft International Convention on the Elimination
of all forms of Religious Intolerance

Statement submitted by the International Humanist
and Ethical Union, a non-governmental organization
in consultative status (Register)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 28 and 29 of Economic and Social
Council Resolution 288 B (X).

Received 2 January 1965

In order to ensure that the Draft Convention will cover all aspects of
the problem, the International Humanist and Ethical Union proposes the
following paragraphs for inclusion in the document.

For the Preamble:

Considering that the Charter of the United Nations is based on the
principles of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and that
the **rights** of human beings are not contingent upon the acceptance or
rejection of any given religion or of religion in general;

Considering that all Member States have pledged themselves to promote
and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and
fundamental freedom for all without discrimination as to race, sex, language
or religious beliefs and practices or dissention from any and all religious
beliefs or practices;

Considering that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change one's religion and freedom to develop one's moral potential while not adhering to any religion and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion in teaching, practice worship and observance, or his dissent from any or all religious beliefs or practices.

Articles to be included in the body of the Convention

1. In this Convention, the term "discrimination on ground of religion or belief" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on one's religious beliefs or practices, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

2. Parents or legal guardians have the right to decide upon the religion or belief in which a child should be brought up. This right should be free from interference from any religious group, from the State, or any combination of religion and State. In the case of a child who has been deprived of its parents, the best interest of the child being the guiding principle, adoptive or foster parents or guardians should be chosen without primary regard to religion or belief and they should have the right to guide the development of the child's religion or belief. However, all welfare factors being equal, if adoptive or foster parents or guardians are available whose religious beliefs or non-beliefs are similar to those held by the natural parents, they should receive preference. If the child has reached a sufficient degree of understanding, his wish shall be primary.