



# General Assembly

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## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2007

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/62/439/Add.2)]

### 62/154. Combating defamation of religions

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* that all States have pledged themselves, 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 race, sex, language or religion,

*Recalling also* the relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights in this regard,

*Recalling further* the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000,<sup>1</sup> welcoming the resolve expressed in the Millennium Declaration to take measures to eliminate the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in many societies and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies, and looking forward to its effective implementation at all levels, including in the context of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* the proclamation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations,<sup>3</sup> and inviting States, the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, within existing resources, other international and regional organizations and civil societies to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action contained in the Global Agenda,

*Welcoming* the launch of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, intended to respond to the need for a committed effort by the international community, in order to promote mutual respect and understanding among different cultures and societies, and the appointment in this regard of the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations,

<sup>1</sup> See resolution 55/2.

<sup>2</sup> See A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I.

<sup>3</sup> See resolution 56/6.

*Welcoming also* the progress achieved in the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action,

*Underlining* the importance of increasing contacts at all levels in order to deepen dialogue and reinforce understanding among different cultures, religions, beliefs and civilizations, and welcoming in this regard the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Ministerial Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Tehran on 3 and 4 September 2007,<sup>4</sup>

*Reaffirming* that discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes a violation of human rights and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter,

*Convinced* that respect for cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, as well as dialogue among and within civilizations, is essential for peace, understanding and friendship among individuals and people of the different cultures and nations of the world, while manifestations of cultural prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia towards people belonging to different cultures, religions and beliefs generate hatred and violence among peoples and nations throughout the world,

*Recognizing* the valuable contributions of all religions and beliefs to modern civilization and the contribution that dialogue among civilizations can make to an improved awareness and understanding of common values,

*Reaffirming* the need for all States to continue their national and international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs, and emphasizing that States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion and belief,

*Underlining* the important role of education in the promotion of tolerance and the elimination of discrimination based on religion or belief,

*Deeply alarmed* at the rising trends towards discrimination based on religion and faith, including in some national policies and laws that stigmatize groups of people belonging to certain religions and faiths under a variety of pretexts relating to security and illegal immigration,

*Alarmed* at the serious instances of intolerance, discrimination and acts of violence based on religion or belief, intimidation and coercion motivated by extremism, religious or otherwise, occurring in many parts of the world, in addition to the negative projection of Islam in the media and the introduction and enforcement of laws that specifically discriminate against and target Muslims, particularly Muslim minorities following the events of 11 September 2001, and threatening the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Noting with concern* that defamation of religions could lead to social disharmony and violations of human rights,

*Recalling* its resolution 61/164 of 19 December 2006,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General<sup>5</sup> and the conclusions contained therein;

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<sup>4</sup> A/62/464, annex.

<sup>5</sup> A/62/288.

2. *Expresses its deep concern* about the negative stereotyping of religions and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in matters of religion or belief still in evidence in the world;
3. *Strongly deplores* physical attacks and assaults on businesses, cultural centres and places of worship of all religions as well as targeting of religious symbols;
4. *Expresses its deep concern* about programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at the defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred, in particular when condoned by Governments;
5. *Also expresses its deep concern* that Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism;
6. *Notes with deep concern* the intensification of the campaign of defamation of religions and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September 2001;
7. *Recognizes* that, in the context of the fight against terrorism and the reaction to counter-terrorism measures, defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred becomes an aggravating factor that contributes to the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms of members of target groups, as well as their economic and social exclusion;
8. *Deplores* the use of the print, audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet, and any other means to incite acts of violence, xenophobia or related intolerance and discrimination against Islam or any other religion, as well as targeting of religious symbols;
9. *Stresses* the need to effectively combat defamation of all religions and incitement to religious hatred, against Islam and Muslims in particular;
10. *Emphasizes* that everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression, and that the exercise of these rights carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to limitations as are provided for by law and are necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, protection of national security or of public order, public health or morals and respect for religions and beliefs;
11. *Urges* States to take action to prohibit the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;
12. *Also urges* States to provide, within their respective legal and constitutional systems, adequate protection against acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from defamation of religions, to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and beliefs and the understanding of their value systems and to complement legal systems with intellectual and moral strategies to combat religious hatred and intolerance;
13. *Urges* all States to ensure that all public officials, including members of law enforcement bodies, the military, civil servants and educators, in the course of their official duties, respect people regardless of their different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate against persons on the grounds of their religion or belief, and that any necessary and appropriate education or training is provided;
14. *Underscores* the need to combat defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred by strategizing and harmonizing actions at the local, national, regional and international levels through education and awareness-raising;

15. *Urges* States to ensure equal access to education for all, in law and in practice, including access to free primary education for all children, both girls and boys, and access for adults to lifelong learning and education based on respect for human rights, diversity and tolerance, without discrimination of any kind, and to refrain from any legal or other measures leading to racial segregation in access to schooling;

16. *Calls upon* the international community to foster a global dialogue to promote a culture of tolerance and peace based on respect for human rights and diversity of religion and belief, and urges States, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the print and electronic media to support and participate in such a dialogue;

17. *Affirms* that the Human Rights Council shall promote universal respect for all religious and cultural values and address instances of intolerance, discrimination and incitement of hatred against members of any community or adherents of any religion;

18. *Takes note* of the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and include human rights aspects in educational programmes, particularly the World Programme for Human Rights Education proclaimed by the General Assembly on 10 December 2004,<sup>6</sup> and calls upon the High Commissioner:

(a) To continue those efforts, focusing on the contributions of cultures, as well as religious and cultural diversity;

(b) To collaborate with other relevant international organizations in holding joint conferences designed to encourage the dialogue among civilizations and promote understanding of the universality of human rights and their implementation at various levels, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and the unit within the Secretariat mandated to interact with various entities within the United Nations system and coordinate their contribution to the intergovernmental process;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including on the possible correlation between defamation of religions and the upsurge in incitement, intolerance and hatred in many parts of the world, to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

*76th plenary meeting  
18 December 2007*

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<sup>6</sup> See resolutions 59/113 A and B.