

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief (A/67/178)

Additional information to the Report of the Secretary-General

I. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

1. On 4 and 5 October 2012, the OHCHR organized the final expert workshop in Rabat, Morocco on freedom of expression and the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred which concluded the series of experts workshops, organized by OHCHR in the different regions of the world, which had considered relevant laws, policies and jurisprudence in countries of the different regions and discussed strategic responses to incitement to hatred, both legal and non-legal in nature.

2. The experts jointly adopted the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.¹The Plan recommends, *inter alia*, the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation with preventive and punitive action to effectively combat incitement to hatred, as well as the empowerment of minorities and vulnerable groups. Other key factors put forward in the Plan are the collective responsibility of public officials, religious and community leaders, the media and individuals, and the need to nurture social consciousness, tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue.

¹ A/HRC/22/17/Add.4

3. Paragraph 11 of resolution 67/178 encourages all 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, and in this respect requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to include those updates in her reports to the Human Rights Council” “Countering discrimination, in particular racial discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion and others who are marginalized” is a key thematic priority of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the High Commissioner has often advocated against intolerance and violence on the basis of religion and belief, in her public statements and has referred to updates in her annual reports to sessions of the Human Rights Council.

4. Issues concerning combating intolerance negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief are integrated in the work of all Branches and Divisions of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Section primarily responsible is the Anti-Discrimination Section of the Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch which organizes anti-discrimination training and workshops; assists States in the elaboration of anti-discrimination legislation and national actions plans against racism and discrimination; and supports the work of several inter-governmental Durban follow up mechanisms where these issues are considered.

5. The Section is also responsible for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on the global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action which reports on efforts taken by States around the world in addressing these important issues. The Anti-Discrimination Section has also launched a database of good practices, which will include initiatives taken in this regard.²

II. United Nations human rights treaty bodies

6. During its eighty-first session, in August 2012, and its eighty-second session in February – March 2013, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination made reference to the intersectionality of racial and religious discrimination in the course of its work. It recommended that a number of States parties take measures to ensure that all persons enjoy their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, without discrimination, in accordance with article 5 of the Convention.

7. The Committee was concerned by reports of stereotyping, prejudice and misconceptions expressed by public officials and through the media and the Internet with regard to members of ethnic and religious minorities. In particular, in one State party, the Committee expressed concern regarding an inflammatory remark by a Member of Parliament vilifying persons from

² <http://adsdatabase.ohchr.org>

Central Asia or the Middle East based on their skin colour, country of origin and religion, but welcomed strong criticism of such statement by other public officials. In such cases of discrimination on the basis of race and religion, the Committee recommended States parties to effectively prosecute those responsible, take active steps to prevent candidates and organizations from promoting and inciting racial discrimination, and to intensify efforts to promote ethnic harmony through, inter alia, raising awareness to combat existing stereotypes and prejudices against certain ethnic and religious groups.

III. Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

8. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance annual thematic report³ to the 23rd session of Human Rights Council focused on each a tool to prevent and combat racism. The Special Rapporteur also presented to the Council his report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/154 on the “Inadmissibility of certain practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”⁴. The thematic report expounds on the international framework relating to racism and education, equal access to quality education and the challenges faced by disadvantaged and discriminated groups in this regard. He also considers factors impacting the full enjoyment

³ A/HRC/23/56

⁴ A/HRC/23/24

of the right to education without discrimination, including racial violence in schools, armed conflicts and the current economic crisis. The Special Rapporteur recommends that “States should recognize the important role of formal and non-formal education in the deconstruction of prejudices, positive change of negative perceptions, enhanced understanding and social cohesion.”⁵

9. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief presented his report on protecting the freedom of religion or belief of persons belonging to religious minorities⁶ at the 22nd Session of the Human Rights Council. His report emphasizes that the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities should be consistently interpreted and implemented from a human rights perspective and further highlights that, in keeping with the principle of normative universalism, the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities cannot be confined to the members of certain predefined groups; they should be open to all persons who live de facto in the situation of a minority and are in need of special protection to facilitate a free and non-discriminatory development of their individual and communitarian identities.

10. In his report, the Special Rapporteur also suggests that States consider implementing the Rabat Plan of Action⁷ and in this context the Special Rapporteur further recommends that States encourage, promote and

⁵ A/HRC/23/56, para. 57(e)

⁶ A/HRC/22/51

⁷ Paragraph 63 A/HRC/22/5 (further on Rabat Plan of Action see A/HRC/22/17/Add.4)

facilitate interreligious communication in consultation with religious and belief communities with the view to enhance mutual understanding and dispel negative stereotypes which are the root causes of hatred, discrimination and violence. States should establish a policy of public symbolic actions by which to send a clear message that religious or belief minorities are part of the larger society. He calls upon civil society organizations, religious communities, national human rights institutions and other actors to play a crucial role in countering incitement to hatred directed against religious or belief minorities by speaking out in support of those minorities. Public expressions of solidarity can also prevent further escalation and violence and create an atmosphere of inter-communal trust.⁸

11. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression to the 67th United Nations General Assembly focused on the prevention of hate speech and incitement to hatred (A/67/357). His report underscored that the right to freedom of expression can and should be restricted only in extreme cases, such as incitement to genocide and incitement to hatred. The report further emphasises that promoting freedom of expression is essential to create an environment conducive to critical discussions of religious and racial issues and to promote understanding and tolerance by de-constructing negative stereotypes.

⁸ Paragraphs 87 - 89 A/HRC/22/5

IV. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

12. The Gender Affairs Division of ECLAC highlighted that gender discrimination impacts all forms of discrimination that women endure, generating specific and aggravated effect when compared to men who are discriminated against on the same grounds. This is also the case of discrimination and violence against persons based on religion or belief.

13. It noted that it is important to consider that the promotion, respect and enjoyment of human rights by women have different characteristics if the rights refer to the private or the public sphere; and that from another perspective, in some cases, serious violations of women's rights are caused and justified by the interpretation of certain groups of their religion. It recalled that the Brasilia Consensus agreed by the Governments of the countries participating in the 11th session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2010) included a reference to the relationship between freedom of religion and gender discrimination. In the context of the commitments necessary to enhance the citizenship of women, it was agreed that freedom of religion and worship, providing that women's human rights are respected.⁹

⁹ Referred to in section b) of the Brasilia Consensus.
http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/noticias/paginas/6/40236/ConsensoBrasilia_ING.pdf.

V. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

14. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations continued its efforts to promote cultural diversity, inclusiveness, religious tolerance and meaningful dialogue in accordance with the United Nations Charter. On 27 and 28 February, hosted by the Government of Austria, the Alliance organized its 5th Global Forum in Vienna which focused on “Responsible Leadership in Diversity and Dialogue”, bringing over 2000 participants from around the world. The Forum adopted the Vienna Declaration on the Alliance of Civilizations.¹⁰

15. In July 2013, the Spokesperson for the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations spoke out on the “Recent Incidents of Ethnic-based Violence and Incitement to Hatred across the Globe and Promoting Cultural Diversity and Inclusiveness.” In the statement, the position of the UNAOC in rejecting all forms of ethnic-based violence and incitement to hatred was strongly re-affirmed. The statement urged concerned religious and political leaders to address the root causes of ethnic and religious violence and uphold the rule of law.

16. Through its activities,¹¹ UNAOC continued to highlight the importance of building bridges between ethnic groups to create an environment conducive to reconciliation, peace and prosperity for all. It

¹⁰ http://www.vienna5unaoc.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Vienna_Declaration.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.unaoc.org/>

forged collective political will and mobilized concerted action aimed at improving cross-cultural understanding and cooperation among countries, peoples, and communities. The Alliance developed its actions at both governmental and civil society levels and also worked to counter forces that fuel polarisation and extremism.

17. In collaboration with governments and civil society, it worked on the implementation of actions at country level or through National Plans for Intercultural Dialogue, comprising initiatives in the fields of education, youth, media and migration in order to promote policy change and long term action at country level.

18. UNAOC also worked to support the development of regional processes to increase cooperation among countries on intercultural dialogue, such as the 2nd Action Plan for the Mediterranean; the 2nd Action Plan for South-Eastern Europe; the conclusions of the 2nd Regional consultation for Asia/South Pacific; the presentation of the Regional Strategy for Latin America endorsed by Ministers and representatives of the region; the launch of a regional debate on the Danube and Black Sea Region, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia promoted by Austria; and the announcement of the League of Arab States of the intention of its Member States to develop their regional strategy.

19. The Alliance continued its key activities in terms of education and with respect to youth and the media; respectively, through its annual Summer School and Fellowship Programmes, organized in partnership with

academic institutions and other organizations as well as its Media Programme and Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) online learning community.

VI. Non-governmental organizations

20. The Bahá'í International Community provided information on the resolution, focusing on “institutionalized incitement to hatred and various forms of violence that specifically target adherents of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran”, adding allegedly that “[i]ncitement to intolerance by members of the clergy and government-controlled or sanctioned media encourages and condones violence against Bahá'ís in that country. “

21. La Cercle de Recherche sur les Droits et les Devoirs de la Personne Humaine (CRED), noted activities and engagement taking place in Cameroon under the Programme national anti-discrimination (PNAD), consistent with the objectives of resolution 67/178, including: a national campaign of awareness-raising about equality, non-discrimination, dignity and tolerance; elaboration of a draft code in relation to foreigners; and a sectoral study on the ethnic-social composition of the population of Cameroon.

22. Fundación Argentina a las Naciones “Camino a la Verdad” (FANCV) encouraged the United Nations to take measures that help all the peoples of all the States, noting that it is not races, ethnicities, religions, political

parties... that divide the world but that what that truly separates peoples is the “justice of truth.” It encouraged progress beyond “where we come from but how far we are willing to go in pursuit of realizing the true essence of the goal we preach.”

23. FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) submitted information compiled from contributions from FIDH member organizations. It provided information on “incitement and acts of violence based on religion and belief”, “discrimination based on religion and belief”, and “actions taken by States to foster religious intolerance” based on the “situation in Bangladesh, Burma, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Pakistan, China (Tibet) and Vietnam.”

24. The Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI) submitted contributions for combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence against persons, based on religion or belief, citing “lesson from Indonesia’s experience.”
