

Chairman's final statement of the Rabat+5 Symposium

6-7 December 2017

At this commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of incitement to hatred, the participants to the Rabat+5 symposium discussed the state of use by various stakeholders of the standards and policy recommendations articulated in Rabat in 2012. I welcome the translation of these standards into several languages, including by civil society actors who have found them useful for their grassroots work. I would also like to recall the consensual Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 (“Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief”), which enjoys broad support from various stakeholders.

I also note with satisfaction that the Rabat Plan of Action has been referred to in more than 120 UN documents within the past five years. However, a larger diffusion of these standards and deeper analysis of their content would be beneficial to their implementation. New relevant stakeholders, particularly in the field of religious institutions, faith-based organisations, education, parliamentary and judicial authorities as well as the media, would contribute to optimising the beneficial impact of the Rabat Plan of Action.

I also welcome the expansion of these Rabat standards from merely the prohibition of incitement to hatred to the larger horizons of human rights responsibilities of faith-based actors. The Beirut Declaration and its corresponding 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights”, adopted in March 2017, are hence an important addition that complements the Rabat Plan of Action. The various faith-based civil society actors assembled in Beirut have thus articulated common grounds and have made concrete commitments of how “faith” can stand for “rights” more effectively so that both enhance each other. One highly symbolic activity, which is also mentioned in the Beirut Declaration, is the annual walk of “Faith for Rights” each 10 December in all parts of the world.

The Rabat+5 Symposium offered an opportunity for the various stakeholders to engage with several experts who contributed to the elaboration of the Rabat Plan of Action and the 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” and to hear experiences in the area of combatting violence in the name of religion, both by State representatives, national human rights institutions and civil society actors. The participation of a number of mandate holders of international human rights mechanisms also enriched the discussions at the symposium from a human rights perspective.

Finally, the symposium focused on concrete “Faith for Rights” projects at the grassroots level in various parts of the world. Going beyond the general narrative of coexistence among people of different origins, cultures and religions, I believe it is now vital to use the Rabat and Beirut standards in practice and conceive projects that contribute to their full implementation. I welcome that the Rabat+5 Symposium offered a platform to exchange practices and ideas and particularly the emergence of creative action points to inspire policies and synergies of the various stakeholders.