

AS DELIVERED

PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UN, GENEVA

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
13TH SESSION (01-26 Mar 2010)**

**AGENDA ITEM 3: Interactive Dialogue on Reports by SR on Human Rights
Defenders and SR on Freedom of Religion or Belief
(11th Mar 2010)**

Statement by India

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders and Freedom of Religion or Belief for their reports and would like to confine our remarks to the report by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Ms Asma Jahangir, who is finishing her mandate and has presented her last general report to the Human Rights Council.

02. We appreciate the work done by the Special Rapporteur over the last six years during which she has contributed thematic analyses on various important issues relating to her mandate, such as conversions, religious symbols, incitement to religious hatred, religious minorities and religious intolerance and rights of women. In her current report, she has provided an overview of her mandate, as also an overview of general patterns and issues of concern. In this regard, we take positive note of the early warning signs of discrimination that she has listed, and the concerns that she has expressed on discrimination, both on the grounds of religion and in the name of religion. We also take note of her emphasis on the structure of the State, its methods of governance and educational policies and the commitment of Governments and societies to fundamental human rights as central ingredients to religious harmony. In this regard, we would request her to share her views on the *desirability* of religious education in schools, especially in a secular state, as distinct from the obvious *legality* of it that flows from the ICCPR.

03. In conclusion, we thank the Special Rapporteur for her valuable contribution to the Council over the past six years and wish her well in her future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. President.