PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UN, GENEVA

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
20TH SESSION (18th June to 6 July 2012)

AGENDA ITEM 3: Panel on the promotion and protection of human rights in a multicultural context, including through combating xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance
(29 June 2012)

<u>Statement by India</u>

Madam President,

The Charter of the United Nations says that the peoples of the United Nations are determined to practice tolerance and live together in peace. Peace and tolerance, therefore, form the core set of values that the United Nations has painstakingly promoted ever since its inception. These values, attitudes and ways of life underscore freedom, justice, solidarity and respect for diversity, dialogue and understanding. Much of the conflict in today's world is driven by the absence of tolerance. Forces that would like the language of violence to replace the language of dialogue, understanding, diversity and tolerance fuel and stoke this conflict resulting in grave violations of human rights. This violence is spreading its tentacles and threatening to destroy the moral values and fabric of tolerance and composite culture that has propelled progress for mankind. There is need to create an environment conducive for fostering dialogue between diverse cultures, faiths and religions that inculcate the values that promote transition from xenophobic attitudes to understanding and reason, from discrimination to equality and from intolerance to tolerance.

2.   Madam President, the history of India is a story of conversations between different civilizations and cultures. We have a tradition of respect, give and take between faiths and cultures. India is home to the most diverse mix of people professing different faiths, speaking different languages and practicing a diverse culture with many philosophical traditions and is located at Asia's cultural cross-roads. Our nation was

built on the foundations of deep and abiding commitments to the values of liberal, social democracy. Pluralism, secularism, multi-culturalism and the principles of equity, social justice and the rule of law are core values of our civilization and the bed-rock of our Republic. India's great experiment of a billion people of such great diverse persuasion, working together seeking their salvation in the framework of a democracy can offer valuable lessons for all multi-cultural societies. Any meaningful solution to combating xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance must be based on the principles of democratic pluralism and inclusiveness, the respect of rule of law and of diversity of opinion and faith. The voice of moderation has to be empowered in all societies to make the world a better place to live in. The principle of an "eye for an eye" as Gandhiji often reminded us would leave us all blind.

3.   We are disturbed by the rise of intolerance world-wide. We are troubled by the increase in resources, financial and otherwise, that are being made available to violent and intolerable groups that misuse religion, cultural identities and ethnicity to justify and propagate their extremist agendas. Efforts to counter such tendencies divert attention and much needed resources from development efforts in the developing world including India.

4.   India supports all efforts to build bridges of understanding between nations, peoples, religions and cultures across the many fault-lines that exist. As Gandhiji rightly said "intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit". Perhaps the most definitive guarantee against discrimination, xenophobia and racial prejudice is development and nurturing of multi-cultural, democratic and pluralistic traditions with the inculcation of values, of tolerance and respect for diversity and implementation of appropriate educational and legislative strategies. We hope this Panel will come up with ideas and reflections for practical approaches to promote inter-cultural tolerance and respect.

        Thank you, Madam President.

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