

**IPHRC reaffirmed the importance of family as the natural and fundamental unit of society that is entitled to protection by State and Society, during its thematic debate on “Protection of Family Values” on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

**Jeddah 23 April 2015:** In line with its past practice of holding thematic debates on issues of contemporary concerns to the OIC, the IPHRC held an open discussion, on 21<sup>st</sup> April, on the theme of “Protection of Family Values”. Besides Commission Members, the debate was attended by OIC Secretary General and a number of international experts who dwelt on the subject from various aspects including challenges faced both by the institution of family and its members in different contexts and situations as well as made a number of important recommendations on how to strengthen this fundamental unit of society.

Representative of OIC Member and Observer States also expressed keen interest in the debate and stressed the importance of collective action to protect, preserve and promote these values, which are considered as crucial in developing progressive, peaceful and tolerant societies that are at peace within and without.

At the end of the debate, the Commission reaffirmed the fundamental definition of family as a long-term consensual relationship between a man and a woman who are bound by the reciprocal rights and responsibilities enshrined in Islamic teachings. IPHRC reiterated that men and women enjoy equal human dignity and fundamental human rights but have different roles and responsibilities within the family and society, and that Islam nowhere implies superiority or inferiority to either of the sexes.

IPHRC further reaffirmed that as outlined in the relevant international standards such as Art 16 (3) of UDHR, family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. A number of core human rights documents such as ICCPR, ICESCR and CRC unambiguously oblige all States to provide such protection and support for the family, which serves as the custodian of morals and traditional values recognized by the community and society. The Commission strongly condemned the growing trend of confusing the definition with new and controversial notions of sexual orientation and LGBT families that are neither universal nor recognized by international human rights standards.

While highlighting the importance of providing protection to each member of the family, the important role and responsibility of parents was reiterated that allows them special rights in decisions about the kind of religious, moral and educational activities of their children. The meeting emphasized the need for greater awareness for children on sexual education in accordance with their evolving mental capabilities but condemned the practice of promoting divisive and non-universal rights of comprehensive sexuality

education to children, which include morally unacceptable concepts, behaviours and practices to many religious communities and societies including Islam.

The Commission emphasized that every country or group of countries have the right to formulate their laws and regulations based on their value systems, including in family affairs. This right was affirmed in many provisions within international laws and international human right instruments including Section I (5) of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, which amply highlights the principle of due recognition and respect for cultural and religious diversity in the field and application of human rights.

The meeting stressed that family in Islam was the core unit of society which has the task and fundamental role in maintaining the social cohesion. Family in Islam refers to both nuclear and extended structures. Ideal family consists of husband and wife but single-parent family, especially woman-headed family should be acknowledged as the consequence of divorce and other factors. Islam also provides guidance to protect this kind of family through different mechanisms such as inheritance, donation as well as the extended familial support system from the community and the government.

The meeting stressed that in Islam, sexual relationship between men and women was recognized and legal only within the bounds of marriage. It further stressed that a Good society can only be upheld by the healthy and stable family, which is pronounced by the Quran as “Sakina, Mawwada and rahma” (comfort, love and mercy) and can only be achieved through the marriage between man and woman as husband and wife (father and mother to their children). Any practice that potentially threaten the integrity of the family should not be seen as part of “freedom of choice.

Additionally the IPHRC affirmed that a healthy and stable family could only be accomplished when husband and wife are considered equal in dignity and fundamental human rights both in the family and society. They should be treated based on gender justice and gender equity. Mutual support and complementing each other between husband and wife, as enshrined in Islamic values, were the basis to carry out equal responsibilities and to enjoy basic rights within the families. Equal opportunities for all members of the family in developing their physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual and other human capacities must be ensured beside providing protection to members of family from all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence.

### **Recommendations:**

IPHRC underlined the importance of undertaking advocacy activities at relevant forums, including working with pro-family NGOs for holding conferences and seminars with the view to promoting and advancing family values. In this context, The IPHRC invited the CFM and the OIC Social and Family Department to organize broad-based international conferences in collaboration with like-minded geographical groups, institutions of civil Societies, particularly NGOs and NHRI in the OIC Member States.

IPHRC expressed strong concerns on the contents of a number of publications issued by various UN bodies such as UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA that elaborate on the so-called notion of sexual orientation and comprehensive sexuality education for children as disturbing and morally unacceptable to various religious values as well as potentially harmful to the very institution of family. It urged these UN bodies to refrain from using such advocacy material that has not been approved or adopted by consensus, thus undermining the spirit of the universally accepted human rights values, norms and instruments.

IPHRC called upon all Member States to support the OIC positions and resolutions on the family issue, including family values and protection of the family.

IPHRC recognized and stressed the urgent need to find ways and means to effectively protect the family and family integration in conflict and post-conflict situations as well as other emergencies and situations such as migrant and refugee families. To that end, it urged OIC Member States to ensure provision of basic human rights and legal protection to these affected families in particular the right for education and health.

IPHRC called on all stakeholders, including UN mechanisms, NGOs and national human rights institutions to put the family at the core of their agendas as well as avoid the misconceptions and controversies, which contradict the universal family values.