



OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) concludes its 6th Regular Session in Jeddah held from 1- 6 November, 2014

Jeddah, 6 November 2014: The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) held its 6th Session in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 1-6 November 2014. Representatives of OIC Member and Observer States, Secretary General and other senior officials of the OIC, Islamic Fiqh Academy as well as Media representatives attended the Session.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Mohammad Kawu Ibrahim, Chairperson of IPHRC, reflected on deliberations of IPHRC on a number of issues critical to the achievement of its mandate including various reports submitted to the 41st CFM on important issues such as “situation of human rights in Central African Republic” and “Negative impact of unilateral sanctions on human rights of the peoples of targeted countries”. In addition to providing an overview of the Commission’s recent activities, the Chair also underlined the particularity of 6th Session, where an open debate was held on the theme of “Combatting Extremism and Intolerance in Islam” that was meant to address the current challenges of internal cohesion as well as intolerant views and violent policies pursued by some extremist groups in the name of religion. On behalf of the Commission, IPHRC Chair also expressed sympathy to the people of Gaza for the most inhuman aggression meted to them during the last July-August siege by Israel; and with the people of West African countries being ravaged by the Ebola epidemic, especially the two OIC Member-States of Sierra Leone and Guinea. He also drew attention to the evolving political crisis in Burkina Faso and urged for the immediate deployment of the necessary conflict prevention mechanisms to forestall the possibilities of being plunged into a catastrophic humanitarian disaster.

In his inaugural speech, Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary General of the OIC, appreciated the activities of IPHRC and reiterated the need to continuing progress on its aims and objectives in accordance with the priorities set forth by the Commission as well as the on the mandates entrusted by the CFM. Mr. Madani reminded the Commission to expedite work on one of its core mandates i.e. crafting a yardstick on various issues of human rights concern from an Islamic / OIC perspective that each individual member state can look at to measure the distance between the Islamic human rights model and its own laws and practices. Welcoming the thematic focus of the Session, the Secretary General stated that there was no role or place for extremism and intolerance in Islam, which was a religion of peace, reason and enlightenment. While emphasizing the need for squarely condemning acts of intolerance and

extremism in the name of religion to deny the perpetrators of their unjust claims, Mr. Madani stressed the need for addressing the underlying causes of such behavior through a combination of economic, social, developmental and political solutions.

Amb Taib, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the OIC, in his address welcomed the decision taken by the 41st CFM to make Jeddah as the Headquarters of IPHRC, which in his views reflected the importance Saudi Arabia attaches to the promotion of human rights ideals that are in line with the noble values and teachings of Islam. He appreciated the continuing good work by the Commission and reiterated KSA's assurances to providing full support to the Commission in the performance of its mandated tasks in its capacity as the Host country.

During the six day session, the Commission had in-depth discussions on all items on its agenda including human rights violations in Occupied Palestinian Territories; civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in OIC Member States; as well as specific mandates given to it by the CFM such as Islamophobia, negative impact of unilateral economic sanctions on member states; situation of Rohingya Muslim minority, human rights situation in Central African Republic, as well as procedural issues relating to its working methods and establishment of a mechanism for interaction with NHRIs.

On 4th November, the Commission held an open discussion on the theme of the Session i.e. Combating Extremism and Intolerance in Islam, which drew strong interest from OIC Member and Observer states as an apt topic in the backdrop of ongoing developments in the region. At the end of the discussion, the Commission issued a strong press statement on the subject, which strongly condemns the growing trend of extremism and religious intolerance in the world and calls for joint action to collectively address this menace. It reiterated that Islam was a religion of peace, moderation and tolerance that decries all forms of hatred, intolerance and extremist ideologies. The Commission also decided to address the theme of "protection of family values" during its 7th Session.

The Commission reiterated its condemnation of the Israeli aggression against Palestinian population in Gaza during last July-August and expressed its sympathy with the tens of thousands of Palestinians who remain without homes in the aftermath of this inhuman Israeli incursion, with severe consequences for the health and education sectors. The Commission expressed strong concern on the continuing illegitimate Israeli practice of detaining Palestinian citizens without due process, which was illegal under international law. IPHRC reiterated its strong objection to the continuing illegitimate settlement activities in and around East Jerusalem, and in the West Bank and in that context welcomed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement worldwide to bring to fore this important issue of concern. The Commission also issued a detailed Press Release on the situation in Palestine.

The Commission encouraged Member States to consider elaborating a common strategy on combating the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia. It also welcomed

the upcoming meeting of Istanbul Process scheduled to take place in Jeddah in 2015 and urged all stakeholders to focus on the ways to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Action Plan contained in Res 16/18.

The Commission also delved in detail on the issues of right to development and human rights of women and children. As a follow up to its report to the CFM on the “Negative impact of economic and financial sanction on the human rights of the people of targeted States”, the Commission decided to hold an international seminar on the subject that will take place in Tehran on 15-16 December, 2014. The Workshop will be attended by international experts on the subject as well as OIC Member and Observer States and their NHRIs.

In the area of human rights of women and children, Commission delved in detail on issues related to gender equality, violence against women and children. Other controversial issues were also discussed such as gender identity and abortion etc. 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. The Commission condemned all forms of harmful practices such as FGM and other kinds of physical, psychologically or sexual violence against women and girls including forced or child marriages, trafficking in person, sexual violence against women in armed conflict or in areas under foreign occupation. It was decided that the Working Group on human rights of women and children will conduct studies on these topics with the assistance of and in close cooperation with relevant entities and mechanisms such as Fiqh Academy, ISESCO, IDB as well as UN Women and Beijing + 20 process.

The Commission also finalized its decision on how to interact with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and decided to invite them in its future activities in accordance with the modalities set out in that decision. Discussions were also held on the framework to interact with NGOs and broader civil society as well as on the draft working methods of the Commission, which would be finalized in due course.

In his concluding remarks, IPHRC Chairperson reaffirmed Commission’s strong commitment to its aims and objectives as well as expressed its resolve to fulfilling various responsibilities entrusted by Member States in the area of promoting human rights. He also thanked Member States’ sustained support to the work of IPHRC and assured that the Commission would continue to provide its advisory opinion and recommendations on all human rights issues in accordance with the OIC Charter and its Statute. He also expressed gratitude to the OIC Secretary General for his special interest in the work of the Commission as well as for providing intellectual guidance and material support for the smooth functioning of the Commission.
