

**Bismillahi Arrahmani Arrahim**  
**Sunday 19/4/2015**

**Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Members of IPHRC,**

**Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh**

We are gathered here today in the Seventh Session of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), our first exercise for the year 2015. I feel honoured to have been entrusted with the chairmanship of the Commission for this year, as a representative of the Arab Group, and I pray to Allah, Mighty and Sublime be He, to grant me the benefit of His Divine help in carrying out this mission in achieving the tasks inscribed under the Commission's mandate in a way that would inject greater efficiency in its recommendations and consultative role and elevate it as a regional organ that seeks to promote, consolidate and protect human rights. I look forward to your support and to us working hand in hand for the achievement of these goals in the service of the causes of our Islamic Ummah.

Allow me to seize upon this opportunity, in my own name and on behalf of all of you to extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our brother Mr. Mohamed Kawu Ibrahim, our outgoing chairman for the African Group, our for his sagacious leadership of our Commission throughout the past year, and for his valuable efforts in consolidating the Commission and its structures in favour of an early launch of its action to fulfill the tasks invested in it.

May I also, with your permission, welcome our new members to the Commission: Dr. Rashid bin Hamed bin Humaid Al Balushi from the Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Saeed Mohammad Abdullah Amir Alghafli from the UAE, Mr. Alhoussein Thiam from Guinea and Mr. Adama Nana from Burkina Faso, and we look forward to their constructive participation in the Commission.

**Distinguished Commissioners,**

Over the past year, many parts of the world, including some of our Member States, have been witness to such a wide range of events that have all in all, formed major watersheds on the path of human rights protection and consolidation, along with the attendant developments which the Commission must keep under observation for evaluation and recommendation as may be needed. In December, last year, France witnessed an assault against the paper 'Charlie Hebdo' at the hands of French citizens as a reaction to the paper's publication of defamatory cartoons against the Gracious Prophet (PBUH). This assault and the ensuing reverberations led to a growing

advocacy of the need to agree on an objective and rational understanding of the concept of ‘freedom of speech’ and to ensure that international legal texts relevant to human rights as to freedom of speech, are interpreted erroneously. Indeed, the Commission has issued a declaration condemning that unjustified aggression and shed unambiguous clarifications on the texts of international law which do place a limit on freedom of speech when the matter oversteps the fine line between due respect for the stipulations of the law and stepping over them into prejudicing the rights of others.

I have the confidence that you do share with me the opinion that the Commission needs to continue according this matter its full interest, in view of its repercussions and grave impact that could only lead to driving the wedge further between nations and cause further fragmentation and tension between civilizations, and the loss of respect for each other’s diverse political, economic, cultural and social conditions, across the world. In this connection, it might be appropriate, as suggest by some colleagues, that for the Commission’s debate in its coming eighth session, we may choose the subject of: “Boundaries of Freedom of Expression” and the attendant aspects.

**Dear Commissioners,**

The danger of terrorism and extremism is still a reality in many parts of the world, particularly in our own Islamic countries, and ill-advised factions, groupings and individuals continue still to commit serious violations against human rights in the name of Islam which has nothing to do with them. The Commission, having expressed its strongest condemnation of these violations, maintains its call for the concertation of regional and international efforts as well as those of the Member States to evolve clear-cut strategies in harmony with universal human rights criteria to put an end to this phenomenon. The Commission may possibly play a fundamental role here, in alignment with the findings of its deliberations on the theme of: “Islam and its Combat against Extremism and Intolerance” at its sixth session whose recommendations we are striving to carry through.

The Commission strongly condemns the heinous attacks, the killings and gross violations of human rights against civilians perpetrated by the Daash formation in Syria and Iraq, the despicable event involving the burning alive of the Jordanian pilot, and the extension of Daash onslaughts to include the Palestinian refugees in the Yarmuk refugee camp in Syria who are subjected to the most atrocious violations in the form of killings, starvation and dispersal. The Commission also condemns the attack carried out against a number of Egyptian security agents in Sinai early this month and the killing of Coptic individuals in Libya last February, as well as the terrorist attack witnessed in Tunisia at the hands of Al-Qaeda operatives in North Africa against the Bardo Museum in Tunis last March claiming the lives of a significant number of innocent victims. Likewise, the Commission vigorously condemns the terrorist attack on Jerissa University in Kenya which was carried out by Al Shabab movement as well as the recent attack on the Somali Ministry of Culture and Education in Mogadishu, the continued gross violations of the civilians’ human rights at the hands of Boko Haram elements in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries, and the ongoing ordeal of the kidnapped girls.

The Commission expresses its profound sympathy with the families of the victims that fell in these attacks. On the other hand, the Commission calls upon the Member States and the relevant humanitarian organizations and UN agencies to take urgent steps to alleviate the sufferings of the Yemeni people and extend the necessary humanitarian aid and medical and food supplies to the affected citizens. The Commission also highly commends the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, sovereign of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the extension of 274 million dollars in response to the UN call for urgent humanitarian relief for Yemen.

**Distinguished Commissioners,**

Just as deeply concerning for the Commission is the continual rise of the phenomenon of intolerance and hatred against Islam and Muslims and the attempts to create an amalgam between terrorism on the one hand and Islam and Muslims on the other, particularly in certain Western countries as well illustrated by the Begeda movement against Muslims in Germany, by the massacre of a number of Muslim students in the US State of Northern Carolina in February last, and by the recent advocacy, in certain European states, of supposedly anti-terrorist laws which, under closer analysis, appear to be specifically targeting Islam and Muslims among those countries' nationals or immigrants.

**Distinguished Commissioners,**

Among the most prominent recent issues of deep concern for the Member States there has been the ordeal endured by emigrants to Europe from a number of African states, and the hardships and dangers they face, which often result in their drowning even before they reach the European shores. Over the past two days there have been reports of a large number of them actually drowning or being burnt, including women and children. The Commission may deem it appropriate to shed some light on this issue.

**Honourable Commissioners,**

On the agenda of our present session we have a number of items as submitted before you, which we will be addressing in a while. However, it might be opportune for me here to draw your kind attention to the critical value of the present stage in the Commission's life. The Commission, as you well know, has over the past three years, managed to establish for itself a sturdy foundation such as to enable it to fulfill its duties in harmony with its governing rules and regulations, adopting its rules of procedure, its mechanisms for interaction with national human rights institutions, establishing its own website, submitting two reports to the ministerial council, one regarding the completion of an assignment relevant to the situation in the Republic of Central Africa, and the other on the impacts of the unilateral sanctions on people's full enjoyment of human rights, along with a third report on the phenomena of Islamophobia and animosity towards Islam and Muslims, a report which the Commission is in the process of finalizing in cooperation with commissioner Dr. Saleh Bin Mohamed Al-Khatlan and of which a draft has already been elaborated.

You may also agree with me on the need for the Commission's work, over the present stage, to be focused on achieving concrete results in all its deliberations. Also, we are of view that H.E. the Secretary General's address to the Commission offers an encouraging factor for us, given the illuminating comments and guidance contained therein, all of which converge towards the same path we seek to walk on, particularly in the present stage, as already pointed out.

I trust that you have taken cognizance of the Secretary General's letter as well as the response prepared by Brother Ambassador Ibrahim during his chairmanship of the Commission. We shall also take up this important issue again when we receive him as a guest, later. I will also prepare another message to H.E. the Secretary General to lay out the practical steps already taken by the Commission as well as those already in the pipeline, in response to the issues invoked in the Secretary General's message.

**Bismillahi Arahmani Arrahim**

**Tuesday 21/4/2015**

**Excellency, Mr. Secretary General**

**Excellencies the Representatives of the Member States,**

**Honourable Commissioners,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh**

May I first of all extend to you, on behalf of my colleagues, the assurance of our sincere thanks and appreciation for your steadfast support and interest in the IPHR Commission and for involving it in your thoughts and visions on strategies to promote human rights in the OIC Member States. We consider your message to the Commission as a valuable stimulant and support for its action, bearing priceless comments and guidance which all converge towards the same path that we seek to walk on, particularly in the current stage of the Commission's life.

May I also extend our profound thanks and appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Commission's headquarter state, for their continued support to complete the preparation work for the IPHRC headquarters and to provide the required the technical tools and logistics in favour of a steady and smooth work progress in the near future, God willing. We also wish to extend our thanks to the General Secretariat for its facilitation of the Commission's work.

**Excellency, Mr. Secretary General,**

**Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are gathered here today in the Seventh Session of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), this being our first exercise for the year 2015. I feel honoured to have been entrusted with the chairmanship of the Commission for this year, as a representative of the Arab Group, and I pray to Allah, Mighty and Sublime be He, to grant me the benefit of His Divine help in carrying out this mission to achieve the tasks inscribed under the Commission's mandate in a way that would inject greater efficiency in its recommendations and consultative role and elevate it as a regional organ that seeks to promote, consolidate and protect human rights. I look forward to your support and to us working hand in hand for the achievement of these goals in the service of the causes of our Islamic Ummah.

Allow me to seize upon this opportunity, in my own name and on behalf of all of you, to extend our congratulations to our brother Mr. Mohamed Kawu Ibrahim, our outgoing chairman for the African Group, on the sagacity with which he steered our Commission throughout the past year,

and our appreciation for his valuable efforts to consolidate the Commission and its structures in favour of an early launch of its action for the fulfillment of its tasks.

May I also, with your permission, welcome our new Commission members, and we look forward to their valuable participation.

**Excellency, Mr. Secretary General**

**Ladies, and Gentlemen**

The Commission has, over the past three years, successfully established well-defined rules which allow it to fulfill its duties in full harmony with its guiding regulations, having adopted, in the process, its rules of procedures, its modalities for interaction with national human rights institutions, and having also set up its own website and submitted reports to the ministerial council, in fulfillment of a mandate, along with another qualitative report on Islamophobia to which the Commission will soon start putting the final touches prior to its submission to the Council. Furthermore, the Commission is currently undertaking a final review of the draft rules for the activation and streamlining of its work, in preparation for their adoption at the present session.

Over the past two days, the Commission looked into the issues on its agenda and listened to a briefing from Amb. Yahaya Lawal, the interim-representative of the Secretary General's special envoy to Jammu and Kashmir, on the human rights conditions there, within the framework of the standing mechanism to watch humanitarian conditions in India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The Commission also listened to a briefing from its Secretariat regarding the coming fifth meeting of the Istanbul Process on resolution 16/18 due to be hosted at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah this coming June. Within the same framework, the Commission drew significant benefit from the informative briefing submitted by H.E. Amb. Zamir Akram, the OIC Group Coordinator at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Commission also deliberated on its pending issues and new mandates, just as it has undertaken an in-depth study of the practical steps that need to be taken to actuate its advisory role and to react to the ideas mooted by H.E. the Secretary General. Indeed the Commission has evolved a detailed proposal for the promotion of studies and researches as an empowering tool for it to better enhance and protect human rights in harmony with the Islamic values and core objectives, and to follow on the ideas included in the Secretary General's message. In this context, I am pleased to convey to you that the Commission has set up a working group to start reviewing and amending the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, in line with the Secretary General's request and the mandate we anticipate from the Ministerial Council. Also the Commission has set up a working group to examine the issue of human rights and that of the so-called "sexual orientation" and any link between them. Another working group has also been set up to consider the boundary that separates between freedom of speech and excitement to hatred or discrimination. On the other hand, the Commissioners will start preparing studies on issues of high priority level for the Commission itself and for the Member States, namely:

- Women's Rights in Islam and in the Member State's laws and legislations.
- Combating Terrorism and Extremism

- Respect for Cultural and Religious Diversity
- The Phenomenon of Islamophobia
- Inheritance Rights
- The Rights of Minorities in Islam.

**Excellency, Mr. Secretary General**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Commission's working groups have held their consultative meetings yesterday and were extensively briefed by the various departments in the General Secretariat on the situation in Palestine, on Islamophobia, Muslim minorities, Women's and Children's rights, and the right to development. Tomorrow the Commission will be submitting its reports and recommendations to the Member States.

**Excellency, Mr. Secretary General,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today the Commission is holding its thematic session which will focus on a most critical issue which is "The protection of family values". The pivotal role played by the family, as a unit, in ensuring the right conditions for the development and wellbeing of its members has become common knowledge worldwide, and the importance of the family as the key building-block in society has been duly acknowledged in the universal declarations of human rights and other international documents and agreements on human rights, particularly in the two international conventions and the agreement on Child rights and as well as in other similar international instruments.

The family assumes a unique role in providing protection and nurturance for children, who represent posterity. The family ensures for them a healthy upbringing within a healthy atmosphere, and helps them develop the right personality for them to be worthy contributors to the erection of a responsible society where peace and stability would prevail.

Islam has paid interest for the family to be built on strong foundations such as to ensure its resilience and strength. Islam has enveloped the family with care and nurturance. The Holy Quran clearly sets out the pillars of a healthy family, foremost of which: mutuality, compassion and high ethics. Islam also provides guidance for the protection of women's and children's rights as well as those of senior citizens and special-needs persons. It also provides guidance as to the values that need to be consolidated and upheld for the benefit of building open-minded, forward-looking and prosperous societies. Also the OIC pays particular interest to women and children, to the family's protection and to coordination in society. The OIC Third Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in 2005 endorsed the idea of setting up a special department in the General Secretariat to cater for the affairs of the family and its members.

**Excellency, Mr. Secretary General,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In the present session we will focus in our deliberations, on the following main items: Reaffirming the concept of the family as society's nucleus that needs to be protected – The importance of ensuring the full implementation by stakeholders of all rights established in international documents for the family's protection – Highlighting the supreme importance which Islam accords to the family as a focal point for the promotion of social justice and wellbeing, and as a fundamental constituent of the Muslim society, Drawing attention to the multiple economic and social challenges facing the family and its members, such as poverty, displacement and dispersal, as well as subjection to conflicts or foreign occupation. Our agenda items also include exploring the philosophical aspects of the concepts propounded by certain circles such as the so-called "sexual orientation", and reaffirming the family's definition as established in international documents on human rights. We look forward to an interactive and inspiring dialogue between the panel members of today, the Commissioners, the Member States and the General Secretariat, it being understood that, at the conclusion of this session, the Commission will be issuing a summary of the deliberations along with the consequent findings and recommendations.

In conclusion, allow me to extend to you all, once again, on behalf of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission, our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for your unfailing support which we hope will be an enduring favour to us, and we look forward to a rich and fruitful exchange of ideas.

Wassamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

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