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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Association Miraisme International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 February 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Freedom of Religion or Belief in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

During the consultation period for the elaboration of the Global covenant on Migration, the Association Miraisme International presented a set of recommendations to diminish the vulnerability that migrant communities face in welcome and transit countries. Discrimination due to religion or race that must be faced by immigrants, especially in regions of North America and Europe is increasingly worrying and requires urgently global attention.

According to the annual report of the Human Rights Organization Watch, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein expressed his concern with the messages of some leaders and with the harmful effect caused in societies for using campaigns filled with intolerance and xenophobia, affecting migrants in different countries of Europe and America. An Example of this, during the last periodic review of Switzerland on November 9th, 2017, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed his preoccupation about the racist stereotypes promoted by members of right-wing populist parties and by the mass media, which have also included xenophobic content in politic advertisements. It is even worrying the lack of integral legislation against discrimination in Switzerland, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR/ACNUR).¹

To profess a religion different to the officially established in the country is, in some cases, a reason of social pointing and derision or even can be punished with persecution and death sentences, in the more extreme cases. The incitation of religious hatred is turning into one of the most preoccupying trigger of violence in the contemporary societies, together with the terrorist and atrocious attacks carried in name of religion. In this sense, migrants that profess a certain religion have been attacked and stigmatized by the welcome societies. Additionally, there is no control for cyberbullying which unleashes destructive criticism and incisive offense to migrants who practice any religion, violating their rights of freedom of religion or belief.

Recommendations:

Promotion of respect to the identity of the other and guarantee the full exercise of their rights in a framework of mutual respect and an expanded moral norm.

We recommend to include, in the Global Covenant for a safety, orderly and Regular migration, the design and implementation of security measures and the guarantee of the freedom of religion or belief of minorities. Furthermore, limits will be established between the discourse of hate and the freedom of expression. These measurements base on equity and respect, should apply to both, those who were born in the country and those welcomed in the immigration country.

It is also crucial to create an awareness-raising exercise involving all the actors of the society, where their responsibility may be evident for the image consolidated of the other. In this sense, it is necessary that the mass media are compromised, so that they become partners of this process and with their role of communicators, contribute to reduce the scenarios of discriminations against migrants.

Plurality and social convergence are useful and crucial tools that can build harmonic societies, based on the coexistence with respect, able to stimulate economic and social processes that belong to sustainable development; thus, reaching the goals addressed in the Agenda 2030. Therefore, the efforts of international entities must be focus on the attention of the migratory phenomenon from an integral approach, providing attention not only to economic and legislative topics but also to social inclusion, empowerment of migrants and the value of their contributions for the economic and social development.

¹ Human Rights Council (2017). The universal periodic review working Group. Period of session 28th. Report of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. Consulted on November 21, 2017 de: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/256/55/PDF/G1725655.pdf?OpenElement>

Welcome/immigration countries, must work to eradicate the new forms of discrimination or social exclusion against ethnic and religious minorities that are in these countries, so that the development of these communities is granted. Because if a culture or religious minority does not integrate to the dominant culture, the first one can be excluded and, in the long-term, can even disappear.

Secular or non-denominational states should promote impartiality and equality for all religions, instead of either imposing bureaucratic obstacles that are exclusive or establishing secularism as a politic religion. In this way, the review of the local regulations as well as its effects on freedom of religion or belief of migrants in those communities is promoted.²

It is of great importance the construction of a neutral education based on universal values aim to build a society that accepts and values multiculturalism. Primary (in the higher grades) and secondary education institutions should promote the knowledge of cultural elements of their students, including religious beliefs and principles. In this way, respect and tolerance would be promoted from childhood and youth, avoiding bullying problems at school.

It is imperative that states legislate and report clearly on how to denounce and defend the freedom of religion or belief of all citizens, nationals and foreigners.

Empowerment of women influences directly on the reduction of violent extremism, given the role that women play in the familiar core. The experience “Mothers for life”³ is highlighted. In this line, it is crucial to encourage leadership of migrant women and to establish tools for an effective inclusion in the community.

To introduce the study about religions in the basic curricular contents may ease the construction of more inclusive societies, since the relation student-community gets stronger in a not-dogmatic but investigative, conversational and analytic way. So, the students ‘autonomy development is promoted based on social development facts of the different cultures.

² Palomino, Rafael, El laicismo como religión política (Secularism as Political Religion) (December 18, 2013). Volume in homenge to Professor Andrés Ollero Tassara (in newspaper), Forthcoming. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2369360>

³ German Institute on Radicalization and De-radicalization Studies (GIRDS). Mothers For Life. Consulted on April 24, 2016 en: <http://girds.org/mothersforlife>