



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 July 2019

Original: English

Seventy-fourth session

Item 72 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [73/164](#) and includes details on steps taken by States to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief, as set forth in that resolution.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/164, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventy-fourth session a report that includes information provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on steps taken by States to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief, as set forth in paragraph 12 of the resolution.

2. The report is based on contributions received from 13 Member States in reply to a note verbale issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).¹ In section II of the report, those contributions are summarized under headings that correspond to the points of the action plan outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of General Assembly resolution 73/164, bearing in mind that some of the information received from some States on their implementation of the action plan was reflected in previous reports on the same topic.² Sections III and IV outline activities undertaken, respectively, by intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations system and by OHCHR in the implementation of the action plan. Section V of the report provides some suggestions and general conclusions.

II. Implementation of the action plan: information received from States

A. Constitutional and legislative frameworks

3. OHCHR received information from Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in relation to constitutional and legislative frameworks present and/or being amended in the countries pertaining to combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief. It also received relevant information from European Union institutions. The full texts can be consulted on the OHCHR website.³

4. Several of the contributions received from States reiterated information previously submitted for reports on the action plan. In that sense, reference is made to previous reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council and to reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.⁴

¹ Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Mali, Malaysia, Peru, Portugal, Serbia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. OHCHR also received a submission/contribution from the European Union institutions in response to the note verbale. The original texts are available for consultation on the OHCHR website at <https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx>.

² See, most recently, the report of OHCHR to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/40/44) and the report of Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/73/153). Not all points of the action plan are reflected in the present report, given that relevant information was not received from Member States.

³ See <https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx>.

⁴ See A/HRC/37/44 and A/HRC/40/44, and A/72/381 and A/73/153, respectively. The full submissions can be found at <https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx>.

B. Extremism and radicalization

5. Lebanon reported that it combats all forms of terrorism, extremism and violence through various means, such as the Charter of the League of Arab States, the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Treaty to Fight Terrorism (Decree 238 of 19 May 2007), and that it had also adopted a national strategy against violent extremism, in which many ministries and national stakeholders participate. Cabinet decision 2018/8 of 27 March 2018 ratified the national strategy with short-, medium- and long-term plans.

6. Malaysia reported that it had established the Department of National Unity and Integration, which has important roles to play in realizing the benefits of diversity for Malaysia and in countering narratives of racist ideas from extremists that could stir up racial or religious hatred and that could constitute incitement to racial discrimination, hostility and violence.

7. Mali reported that, in 2018, a permanent secretariat had been established to implement a national policy on combating violent extremism and terrorism and a plan of action for the period 2018–2020. The plan of action has five pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, responses and social cohesion. It added that the policy and plan of action constituted advances in the efforts to combat intolerance, discrimination, violence based on religion or belief and that their implementation would contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the action plan contained in General Assembly resolution [73/164](#).

8. The Syrian Arab Republic noted the harmful effects on society of armed terrorist groups and extremist activity as part of the conflict in the country and outlined measures taken to implement values of tolerance and moderation and to deal with extremism, including the prohibition of discrimination and violence based on religion or belief and the criminalization of incitement to hatred. It reported that, since 2007, the Ministry of Religion had been carrying out training programmes in the field of “human development” to address extremism experienced by many groups.

9. The Russian Federation reported that, while implementing the State national policy, attention was paid to strengthening the interaction between international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure the rights and protection of national minorities and to ensure non-discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, language or religion. Under the Criminal Code, discrimination against an individual based on religion or belief referred to a category of extremist activity in the Russian Federation. It added that it envisaged having its legislation apply a wide spectrum of criminal and administrative measures for extremist activity.

10. The Russian authorities reported that they focused on the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of extremist activity by bringing them to justice for acts of advocacy and recruitment in order to prevent future radicalization, leading to a decrease in serious violent crimes. Special attention is placed on countering organized manifestations of extremism. In 2018, the activities of several associations and organizations showing sign of extremism were recognized accordingly and prohibited, including associations of football fans and religious groups.

11. The contributions received highlighted that some States are addressing extremism and radicalization under the action plan. States are encouraged to increase their awareness and understanding of these phenomena, ensuring that such information is easily available, widely disseminated and used to develop and improve policies aimed at combating extremism and radicalization. It is important to recall that measures taken to combat religious intolerance and violent extremism should reflect the principles of inclusiveness and participation, as well as be fully consistent

with the obligations of States under international human rights law. They should take gender into account and be adapted to the national context. Key concepts relating to violent extremism should be clearly defined, in particular when they can potentially trigger measures that may impinge on human rights, for example, when the terms “extremism” or “radicalization” are used to cover non-violent activity.⁵

C. Creating collaborative networks to build mutual understanding, promoting dialogue and inspiring constructive action towards shared policy goals and the pursuit of tangible outcomes, such as servicing projects in the fields of education, health, conflict prevention, employment, integration and media education⁶

12. Azerbaijan reported that the moral values promotion fund set up by Presidential decree (10 October 2017) under the State Committee on Religious Associations was used for advocacy and raising awareness in the area of religion and belief, as well as supporting the preservation and development of moral values, preparing programmes relating to State-religion relations and implementing projects aimed at promoting freedom of religion and belief among various communities and in society.

13. A series of documentary films concerning subjects aimed at young people, including the protection of young people from radical religious groups (“Provocation”, 2016), as well as traditions of inter-sectarian unity and solidarity (“Unity is in our blood”, 2018), were commissioned by the State Committee on Religious Associations, with the support of the moral values promotion fund, and have been screened at universities, schools and youth centres.

14. In 2017 and 2018, the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated and participated in activities through the Platform for Peace, which includes 60 local communities. The Council supported members and activists of 15 local committees created to undertake interreligious cooperation and carried out activities targeting local NGOs, international organizations, religious communities, churches and State institutions, women, young people, young theologians and religious officials such as priests, rabbis and imams.

15. Lebanon reported that, under the national strategy against violent extremism, several ministries and stakeholders participate in taking steps aimed at combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief. At the Ministry of Justice, a ministerial committee takes measures that include: (a) overseeing and providing a long-term vision at the executive and local levels; (b) implementing the requirement not to stereotype with regard to any category, group, region or belief; (c) determining the objectives and principles of all public policies and the root causes of extremism; (d) coordinating governmental work in this area; and (e) preparing the foundation for a plan of action in the various fields of the national strategy.

16. Malaysia reported that the Department of National Unity and Integration, together with the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, conduct “dialogues of life” from religious perspectives so that common values can help to form basic action for religious adherents, regardless of their beliefs. It added that a national unity action plan was being developed. A series of round-table discussions have been held with all

⁵ Additional guidance can be found in the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on best practices and lessons learned on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism (A/HRC/33/29).

⁶ Paragraph 7 (a) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

stakeholders, in particular community-based and religious institutions, to foster a shared sense of responsibility for building a more moral and ethical society and to enable Malaysians address the menace of racism, extremism and religious bigotry.

17. Peru reported on collaborative networks to promote dialogue and conflict prevention in the country, in which the Catholic Church played an important mediation role in a number of sectors by assisting in fostering dialogue and finding comprehensive solutions to problems. It also reported that three months of work had been completed with religious leaders from the regions of Huanuco, Piura and Tacna, identifying their contributions to solving social problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, malnutrition and access to health care. An inter-institutional activity was carried out within the framework of World Interfaith Harmony Week, in which the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the Interreligious Council participated. In addition, their representatives signed an agreement to establish a position to deal with the problem of gender violence and to raise awareness of action that communities should take in that regard.

18. The High Commission for Migration of Portugal has a working group for interreligious dialogue composed of representatives of 14 different religious communities to give visibility to religious communities present in Portuguese society, develop interreligious dialogue existing among various communities in the country and promote its further development, and give visibility to the religious dimension of its citizens.⁷

19. The Russian Federation reported on preventive measures taken under its anti-extremism legislation, including through electronic media, information technology, websites, texts and video materials, in relation to identified terrorist groups. It indicated that the Prosecutor General informs the key regulatory body of details and reports of acts that could constitute incitement to hatred. It also highlighted that, as at 1 January 2018, the Prosecutor General had sent 112 requests in respect of more than 25,000 Internet resources to the regulatory body, with a view to limiting or banning access to those resources.

20. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior collaborates with the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Russian Federation and with the regional human rights commissioners in regular joint inspections to detect situations that could manifest themselves as cases constituting incitement to hatred, intolerance, stigmatization or discrimination. The territorial bodies and the Ministry have specialized officers tasked with coordinating such joint action.

21. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of Serbia, as a member of the European Network of Equality Bodies, participated in the preparation of the publication entitled *Faith in Equality: Religion and Belief in Europe*. The publication, also translated into Serbian, presents an analysis of the regulations and practices in the area of prevention of discrimination, especially in the fields of employment and labour, health, education and the provision of services.

22. Ukraine reported that the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, an independent interconfessional consultative association, works with religious organizations by coordinating interfaith dialogue, participates in legislative projects on relations between the State and religious organizations, and organizes charitable events. The Council, composed of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious umbrella associations, represents approximately 85 per cent of religious institutions and hold regular meetings with the State leadership, representatives of

⁷ See www.acm.gov.pt/-/acm-promove-grupo-de-trabalho-inter-religioso?inheritRedirect=true.

Government and authorities. In February 2019, the Council met the Prime Minister of Ukraine to discuss social issues, including State family policy.

D. Creating an appropriate mechanism within Governments to, inter alia, identify and address potential areas of tension between members of different religious communities and assisting with conflict prevention and mediation⁸

23. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, major issues of exercising freedom of religion pertaining to the four traditional churches and religious communities are solved in consultation with the Interreligious Council. In 2008, the Council of Ministers and the Interreligious Council signed an agreement on mutual cooperation aimed at supporting activities of the Council in building interreligious dialogue, religious tolerance and coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

24. Bosnia and Herzegovina also reported that a basic agreement between it and the Islamic community had been prepared and that approval by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina was pending.

25. The Government of Malaysia established the Committee to Promote Understanding and Harmony among Religious Adherents under the joint collaboration of the Department of National Unity and Integration, the Department of Islamic Development and the Institute of Islamic Understanding to provide a venue to resolve religious issues. The Department of National Unity and Integration is currently collaborating with the International Islamic University Malaysia to undertake specialized training on interreligious mediation to strengthen the capacity of religious leaders to resolve conflicts.

26. Mali reported that, in 2013, it had established a department in charge of religious affairs that had put in place an action plan in view of implementing General Assembly resolution 73/164. It also reported that it had formulated a national policy on human rights and a plan of action for the period 2017–2021.

27. Serbia reported on an improved climate in the relationship between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church in the country at the end of 2018 and in the first half of 2019, following a meeting of the highest representatives of the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Government of Romania and the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities of the Ministry of Justice of the Government of Serbia and their subsequent meetings with the Archbishops of the two Churches from areas where some problems existed.

28. In Ukraine, the Commission for the Realization of the Rights of Religious Organizations of Ukraine has been acting since 2008 as a consultative advisory body to develop church-State relations and improve public policy in the sphere of religion. Its main tasks include the coordination of the work of the executive authorities regarding the rights of religious organizations, the preparation of proposals for developing and implementing State policy and the preparation of recommendations on improving the return of religious objects and properties.

⁸ Paragraph 7 (b) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

E. Speaking out against intolerance, including advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence⁹

29. The Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” (A/HRC/40/58, annexes I and II) highlight the role and responsibilities of religious leaders and faith-based actors in promoting human rights. OHCHR continues to use this framework for training and advocacy purposes with faith-based actors, civil society organizations and United Nations human rights mechanisms. In 2018, OHCHR organized two regional workshops, in Tunis and in Marrakech, Morocco, focusing on the role of youth faith actors in promoting human rights, combating incitement to hatred and identifying future steps to protect religious minorities in the Middle East and North Africa region.¹⁰

F. Adopting measures to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief

30. Lebanon reported that, under the Penal Code, the principle of freedom of religion and conscience is reaffirmed, defamation (article 473) and the denigration of religious rites (article 474) are criminalized and disturbing religious events, buildings and property (article 475) is punishable by six months to three years of imprisonment. Under article 317, any written text or speech used to provoke confessional or racial strife or that provokes conflict among confessions are sanctioned by imprisonment of between one and three years and a fine of 100,000 to 800,000 Lebanese lira.

31. The Russian Federation reported that, in 2018, article 282 of the Federal Law Criminal Code had been amended to define incitement to hatred based on sex, race, nationality, language or ethnic origin, religion or affiliation with a social group. The Code addresses the commission of such crimes as a two-stage process, whereby perpetrators are liable for administrative responsibility and punishment at the first stage and the repetition of a crime is met by criminal sanction at the second stage. It added that the Ministry of the Interior had developed a methodological guide for law enforcement agencies on the definition of crimes based on political, ideological, race, national or religious hatred or hostility against any social group.

32. The Syrian Arab Republic reported that article 462 of the Penal Code criminalizes the defamation of religion and prohibits the disruption of religious rites, events and ceremonies or threats of any other acts aimed at destroying places of worship. Article 12 of the Media Law (2011) prohibits the dissemination of materials that provoke confessional strife or denigrate any of the monotheistic religions or belief, or which incite hatred or racism. It added that, under the Law on Kidnapping in Persons (2013), the penalty for kidnapping on any ground, including confessional reasons, could range from forced labour for an indefinite period to the death penalty in cases in which the kidnapping results involves sexual assault or results in permanent disability or death.

33. It is important to recall that, where legal sanctions may be necessary to protect human beings against incitement to hatred, discrimination or acts of violence, three types of expression should be clearly distinguished: expression that constitutes a criminal offence; expression that is not criminally punishable, but may justify a civil or administrative sanction; and expression that does not invoke any legal action but still raises concern in terms of tolerance and respect for the rights of others.

⁹ Paragraph 7 (e) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

¹⁰ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf.

34. Legislation prohibiting the incitement to racial, national and religious hatred should be specific and not overly broad in its scope and application, to be consistent with the international standards on freedom of religion or belief and freedom of opinion and expression. States should also ensure that there is no impunity in the judicial system, where the prosecution and adjudication of such crimes are undertaken.

35. The Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence outlines a six-part threshold test for defining restrictions on freedom of expression and incitement to hatred, taking into account the context, speaker, intent, content, extent and imminence of action against the target group (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, appendix, para. 29). This threshold test has been used by the national authorities for audiovisual communication in Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic for monitoring incitement to violence.

G. Hate crimes

36. In Malaysia, the Government undertook a comprehensive review of two bills on discrimination: the Religious and Hate Crimes Bill and the National Harmony and Reconciliation Commission Bill, which are expected to guarantee that Malaysians will continue to be treated fairly, irrespective of religion, race, place of birth and sex, and are free from any form of discrimination.

37. The United Kingdom reported that, in 2018, the action plan on hate crime¹¹ had been updated to include new commitments to address hate crime on several protected grounds, including religion or belief, as well as funding for specific projects, a national public awareness campaign and a review of the legislation to ensure that it remained effective in dealing with hate. The United Kingdom has supported work to map the levels of anti-Semitism and anti-Christian and anti-Muslim hate crime and encourage reporting from various faith groups.

38. The United Kingdom noted that necessary evidence must be made available to plan appropriate interventions, reporting that, as at 1 April 2017, police forces in England and Wales had disaggregated religious hate crime data to reveal the true scale and nature of the problem. The first published data showed that, in the period 2017–2018, 52 per cent of religious hate crimes had been targeted against Muslims (2,965 offences), with a further 12 per cent targeted against Jews (672 offences). The United Kingdom also supported True Vision,¹² the police online hate crime-reporting portal to facilitate and encourage the reporting of hate crime.

H. Understanding the need to combat denigration and negative religious stereotyping of persons, and incitement to religious hatred, by strategizing and harmonizing actions at the local, national, regional and international levels through, inter alia, education and awareness-building¹³

39. In Argentina, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism conducts workshops, awareness-raising and training of educators in

¹¹ See www.gov.uk/government/news/hate-crime-plan-refreshed-to-protect-victims-and-promote-shared-values.

¹² See www.report-it.org.uk/home.

¹³ Paragraph 7 (g) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

educational institutions and companies. On its website, a large amount of digital content is available, including manuals on communications best practice aimed at journalists and materials on discrimination in general. In 2019, the Institute relaunched its virtual campus,¹⁴ a training space with a wide range of courses offered on the various topics addressed by the Institute.

40. The National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism also raised awareness of the effects that online discrimination produces and the impact that new technologies can have in generating, replicating, having go viral, disseminating and propagating discriminatory practices. Emphasis has been placed on the responsible use of new technologies to generate online environments free from discrimination. A campaign was developed, together with the United Nations Children's Fund, under the title #NoDaCompartir, and a web document on the subject was also created.

41. In Azerbaijan, the State Committee on Religious Associations publishes a "State and religion" magazine and "Society and religion" newspaper. Since 2017, lectures on the prevention of discrimination are included in training courses for judges, employees and graduates of the medical service, and legal clinics.

42. On 19 June 2017, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, representatives of religious communities signed a declaration of the Interreligious Council on combating the stigmatization of survivors of sexual violence in the Bosnia and Herzegovina war. The Interreligious Council also prepared a handbook for religious officers working with wartime victims of rape. In addition to supporting survivors of wartime sexual violence, many religious officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina have dedicated themselves to mobilizing local communities to actively participate in the efforts to combat the stigmatization of this group. The handbook, the first of its kind globally, is the result of joint efforts by experts of four religious communities, in cooperation with representatives of the United Nations Population Fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

43. Peru reported that three international academic events, on religious liberty, pluralism, and religious diversity, as well as on the promotion of non-discrimination and women's leadership in religious spaces, were held, training 486 people, in particular public servants and university students.

44. In Portugal, an interreligious annual meeting of young people – MEET IR – was promoted by the High Commission for Migration in partnership with the Municipality of Fundão, to discuss religious diversity. Nineteen young people participated in the gathering, representing eight different religious communities, with the objective of recognizing and valuing difference and pluralism and jointly reflecting on the contribution that young people in particular make towards creating a better society. As an outcome of the four-day event, the young people formulated a charter on interreligious dialogue targeted at their peers.¹⁵

45. In 2018, the Portuguese Ministry of Internal Administration developed the initiative "Citizenship and non-discrimination" to address the subject of freedom of religion in the school environment and through which 297 awareness-raising activities reached 9,539 children and young people. The same initiative reached 1,305 citizens in 63 awareness-raising activities aimed at the general public.

46. The Ministry of Culture and Information of Serbia allocated funds to the Eparchy of the Šumadija SPC, to Radio Zlatousti to organize an expert meeting on managing negative stereotypes in religious media, with special consideration of

¹⁴ See <http://campus.inadi.gob.ar/>.

¹⁵ See www.acm.gov.pt/-/meet-ir-2018-reune-19-jovens-de-8-comunidades-religiosas.

ethnic, religious and gender stereotypes, and to the Press Council for the implementation of the initiative “Fake news, hate speech and media without an impressum: improving professional standards through self-regulation”. The project of the centre for education and development in Leskovac, entitled “Write, do not discriminate”, was also supported. It also supported the project HAVA-Intercultural Youth Platform, which creates a space for young people to consider the concepts of interculturalism, tolerance and anti-discrimination.

47. Serbia also raised the awareness of its citizens about the victims of all forms of discrimination through a historical perspective, in particular remembrance of the Holocaust victims and the crimes against humanity committed during the Second World War, such as through the project entitled “Never forget the Holocaust, never repeat it: music, records, memories”.

48. The Syrian Arab Republic reported that the Director of Sharia at the Ministry of Education had been working on awareness raising with youth religious groups through dialogues and competitions on issues of tolerance, moderation and religious diversity, respect for places of worship and other beliefs, and countering extremism. A new curriculum was created to inculcate moderation, ensure dialogue and counter incitement and extremism. There is an “electronic school” comprised of over 2,000 students. The National Union of Students organized three seminars at different universities on the role of young people in combating discrimination based on religion and belief, rejecting intolerance and the values of religion in order to make recommendations to religious institutes and universities.

49. The United Kingdom reported that it had funded a number of projects that work with young people to tackle issues of prejudice and intolerance, such as the Anne Frank Trust¹⁶ programme aimed at increasing understanding of the Holocaust, hatred, discrimination, inequality and injustice.

50. The United Kingdom also funded the Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation¹⁷ to support work to address anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic bullying in schools. The project focuses on preventing and changing attitudes and challenging harmful behaviours and stereotypes. The United Kingdom provides both technical and financial support to the Community Security Trust and the Anti-Semitism Advisory Group of the Government, as well as funding for educational school trips to Auschwitz. The Prime Minister, has led cross-party support and committed funds for the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, planned for Victoria Tower Gardens beside Parliament, as an eternal monument in remembrance of the Holocaust. The Centre will focus on the Holocaust and subsequent genocides in order to educate future generations on the importance of fighting prejudice and persecution in all its forms. The Government also supports the Near Neighbours project-funding programme.

I. Recognizing that the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas and interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence¹⁸

51. Azerbaijan reported that the second conference on interfaith dialogue and anti-radicalization was held on 25 and 26 April 2019, organized jointly by the European Union, the State Committee on Religious Associations and ADA University.

¹⁶ See <https://annefrank.org.uk/>.

¹⁷ See www.standupfoundation-uk.org/.

¹⁸ Paragraph 7 (h) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

The fifth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue was held in Baku on 2 and 3 May 2019.

52. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, interreligious dialogue is central to the activities undertaken by the four major religious communities: the Islamic community, the Roman Catholic Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Jewish community, which were supported by the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Such dialogue was established by the Interreligious Council in 1997, a year and a half after the war, with only one goal: fostering reconciliation among different ethnic groups in the country.

53. The Government of Malaysia championed various interfaith dialogues, activities and policies and has spearheaded a number of programmes, activities and policies to ensure that all Malaysians from different ethnic and religious backgrounds live in harmony and thrive together.

54. In Portugal, the international conference “Take care of the other” was held in October 2018, involving national and international experts in the area of interreligious dialogue, as well representatives from academia, religious traditions, NGOs and civil society.¹⁹ There is also a training module on interreligious dialogue focusing on the importance of religions and beliefs in a pluralistic society. In 2018, five sessions of the training module were held, with 195 participants, of whom 116 were women and 79 were men. In June 2018, the High Commission for Migration promoted an interreligious seminar, in partnership with the Embassy of Argentina in Lisbon, dedicated to analysing relevant experiences in Argentina and Portugal.

55. The Syrian Arab Republic reported that the Ministry of Religion was active on social media in order to combat extremist channels and that it had also created theatre pieces, art competitions and television advertisements to disseminate positive values of tolerance and counter negative messages of extremism, such as the social media initiative “Thoughts and young people”. In addition, the national media broadcast a talk show and interactive seminar about the risks of incitement to religious hatred, in which academics and parliamentarians took part.

56. The State policy of Ukraine in the sphere of religion is strategically focused on the expansion of interaction among religious, public and civil institutions and the development of a multilevel dialogue based on tolerance and mutual respect. Currently, 36,700 religious organizations represent 100 denominations. It was reported that representatives of churches and religious organizations had shown a high level of interest in the dialogue and in strengthening cooperation.

J. Fostering religious freedom and pluralism by promoting the ability of members of all religious communities to manifest their religion, and to contribute openly and on an equal footing to society²⁰

57. In Argentina, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism conducted a study in relation to religious minorities, including followers of African religions, and indigenous and ethnic cultural practices, in which 35 per cent of respondents perceived high levels of discrimination towards those groups.

58. Azerbaijan reported that the law on freedom of religious belief regulates State-religion relations by providing guarantees for every citizen’s freedom of conscience, regardless of his or her language and religion, racial or ethnic identity. It reported that

¹⁹ See www.acm.gov.pt/-/congresso-do-dialogo-inter-religioso-coloca-a-tonica-no-outro-.

²⁰ Paragraph 8 (b) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

940 religious communities were registered in Azerbaijan, of which 907 were Islamic, 22 Christian, 8 Jewish, 1 Krishna and 2 Baha'i (non-Islamic). It also stated that it had created the conditions necessary to celebrate significant religious ceremonies by Islamic and non-Islamic communities in the country.

59. Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that the Law on the Freedom of Religion and the Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004) confirmed the continuity of the status of legal entity to the Catholic Church, the Islamic community, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Jewish community, as well as to other churches and religious communities recognized as legal entities, and guaranteed them the right to freely regulate their own organizational structure with full respect for the right to freedom of conscience and religion. It reported that churches and religious communities enjoy full autonomy so that they can form different legal entities, publishing institutions and charities, as well as carry out activities and earn income in accordance with the law. Churches and religious communities can collect membership fees and receive gifts from the country and abroad.

60. Bosnia and Herzegovina added that new guidelines giving precise guidance regarding the implementation of the above-mentioned law were prepared by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, pursuant to which the Department for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities had been established.

61. Peru reported that a registry of religious entities had been created, with the goals of strengthening the relationship between the State and the diverse religious entities, in addition to the Catholic Church, and of standardizing their administrative treatment by the State. This voluntary registry contains 140 registered communities from diverse religious origins and establishes criteria for assistance to the religious entities.

62. In Serbia, the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities of the Ministry of Justice continued to undertake activities aimed at improving the intercultural dialogue between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church and encouraging the resolution of all church-property issues and problems. It added that, in 2018, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, pursuant to the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, had handled 947 complaints. In 14 complaints, religious and political affiliation were identified as grounds for discrimination.

63. Serbia reported that the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality had submitted the annual report for 2018 to the National Assembly on 15 March 2019 and that it was available on the Commissioner's website.²¹

K. Encouraging the representation and meaningful participation of individuals, irrespective of their religion, in all sectors of society²²

64. Argentina reported that ingrained stereotyping and stigmatizing practices persisted, which segregated, made invisible and excluded groups and/or people in employment and the work environment. The National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism worked with civil society organizations and private companies in order to achieve inclusive labour relations. It had disseminated information on the subject and published a brochure on the management of diversity in organizations.

²¹ See <http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/en/reports/>.

²² Paragraph 8 (c) of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

L. Adopting measures and policies to promote full respect for and protection of places of worship and religious sites, cemeteries and shrines and to take protective measures in cases where they are vulnerable to vandalism or destruction²³

65. The Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out a project that has become a regular activity – the monitoring of attacks on places of worship and other places of religious significance to religious communities – to improve the protection of religious facilities and other facilities of importance to churches and religious communities (sacred places) of all confessions. It reported that the most recent statistics showed that the number of attacks on religious facilities and cases motivated by religious hatred had been reduced.

66. Early in 2019, the United Kingdom announced increased funding for the following year of the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme,²⁴ which provides funding for physical security measures at places of worship that are vulnerable to attacks motivated by hate crime. In addition, funding has been provided since 2015 to ensure the safety and security of Jewish faith schools, synagogues and communal buildings. The Government also announced a new fund to provide security training for faith communities over a period of three years. A consultation setting out additional initiatives to support faith communities in protecting themselves against attacks and other forms hate crime will be launched on the Government's website.

III. Activities undertaken by intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations system in support of the implementation of the action plan European Union

67. The European Union reported on recent measures taken by its institutions. It noted a study by the Agency for Fundamental Rights²⁵ reporting that, within the European Union, high levels of discrimination existed on the grounds of ethnicity, immigrant background and potentially related characteristics, such as skin colour and religion, and that respondents had highlighted having experienced harassment and violence motivated by hatred.

68. There is a legal framework in place to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination based on a number of general provisions of the treaties of the European Union. The Council of Europe Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law²⁶ established a common response to racist hate speech and hate crime, including online, and the European Commission had adopted comprehensive guidance on its application addressed to national authorities to foster the effective investigation, prosecution and sentencing of hate crime and hate speech.²⁷

69. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 1 June 2017 on combating anti-Semitism, and on 6 December 2018, the Council of Europe adopted a declaration on the fight against anti-Semitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe. A working group on the implementation of the declaration was created to support European

²³ Paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 73/164.

²⁴ See www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-get-security-funding-boost.

²⁵ See <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-main-results>.

²⁶ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008F0913>.

²⁷ See https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=55607.

Union member States in adopting holistic strategies against anti-Semitism by the end of 2020.

70. In March 2018, the First Vice-President of the European Union held a round table with 10 European Muslim leaders as part of the “Future of Europe” debate and the European Commission’s engagement with Muslim communities in Europe. The Commission convened a high-level conference at the end of 2018 on addressing intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the European Union, which gathered together national authorities, civil society organizations and international organisations.

71. The European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup passed an inaugural resolution on combating neo-fascist violence, and the parliamentary Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality also discussed the issue of restrictions on Muslim women’s dress.

72. In 2016, the European Union adopted a Code of Conduct, signed with major information technology and social media companies, on countering illegal hate speech online. Evaluations show that information technology companies respond to notices within 24 hours in the large majority of cases and that they removed, on average, 72 per cent of content brought to their attention in 2018, compared with 59 per cent in 2017 and only 28 per cent in 2016.

73. The Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme has funded projects on improving responses to racist hate crime and speech and better supporting victims; monitoring, preventing and countering racist speech online and racism in the media; fostering tolerance and mutual respect through interreligious and intercultural activities; better understanding and addressing the elements of specific forms of intolerance, including anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Afrophobia and anti-Black racism, anti-gypsyism, xenophobia and anti-migrant hatred.

74. At the high-level segment of the General Assembly in September 2018, the European Union partnered with key actors to organize an anti-Semitism campaign to raise awareness of anti-Semitism worldwide. It also co-sponsored a side event on “Women of faith as agents of transformation and peace”, which provided a platform for women of different faiths and regions to exchange best practices with policymakers and the United Nations system.

United Nations strategy and plan of action on hate speech

75. On 18 June 2019, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations strategy and plan of action on hate speech, developed by the working group on the strategy²⁸ led by the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.

76. The goal of the strategy and the plan of action is to allow the United Nations to address hate speech, which poses a threat to its principles, values and programmes, through measures in line with international human rights standards. The objectives are twofold: (a) to enhance and coordinate United Nations efforts to address the root causes and drivers of hate speech; and (b) to enable effective United Nations responses to the impact of hate speech on societies.

²⁸ The working group is composed of 13 entities of the United Nations system: the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Department of Global Communications, Global Pulse, OHCHR, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

77. The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide will serve as the United Nations focal point on hate speech in order to facilitate and oversee the development of more detailed guidance, in close cooperation with the working group and field presences around the world.

78. The United Nations will also engage with Member States in the implementation of the strategy and plan of action through the organization of a conference on education for prevention and its link to countering hate speech.

Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

79. The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect engaged with religious actors to prevent the incitement to violence. In this context, in July 2017, the Office launched the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.²⁹ In collaboration with States and religious institutions, the Office is implementing the Plan of Action in various regions of the world through a programme focused on the role of religious education in preventing incitement to violence and fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. The pilot programme took place in Dhaka in March 2019.

IV. Activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in support of the implementation of the action plan

80. In addition to the action noted in the sections above, OHCHR works on the various dimensions relating to religious intolerance, including multiple discrimination, xenophobia, migration, freedom of religion or belief, religious profiling and incitement to racial, national or religious hatred.

81. OHCHR has engaged on different related issues with various stakeholders, including religious leaders, field presences and United Nations country teams, national human rights commission, academic institutes, and the business and private sector. In addition to its work on the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” with religious and faith-based actors, it is working with information technology companies on a number of human rights issues, including multiple discrimination, artificial intelligence, hate speech and the incitement to racial, national and religious hatred. OHCHR has also been engaging with a number of national and international organizations working to combat anti-Semitism. It is a member of the working group on the United Nations strategy and plan of action on hate speech and will be very involved in their implementation, given that a number of the substantive mandates and mechanisms of OHCHR cover a range of issues relating to hate speech and incitement to racial, national and religious hatred.

82. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has spoken out in various public forums, including the Human Rights Council. For example, in the July 2018 update on a country situation, the High Commissioner noted that Council resolution 16/18, the Rabat Plan of Action and the Beirut Declaration could be useful to address the advocacy of hatred that incites violence, discrimination or hostility based on religion or belief (A/HRC/38/CRP.2, para. 49). At the Global Summit on Religion, Peace and Security, the High Commissioner highlighted the importance of

²⁹ See www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Plan_of_Action_Religious-rev5.pdf.

protecting religious minorities, in particular when they have been targeted through incitement to hatred and violence.³⁰

83. Upon request, OHCHR also reviews draft anti-discrimination and criminal laws and constitutional amendments and supports several countries and specialized bodies in developing national action plans against racism. It also manages a database,³¹ which includes information on these issues, and it develops guidelines and conducts training relating to the points in the action plan. With OHCHR field presences, a number of related activities have taken place, including in Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Senegal and Tunisia, and with journalists from the Russian Federation, Ukraine and West Africa to counter xenophobia and hate speech.

V. Additional issues and conclusions

84. **In line with the spirit and focus of General Assembly resolution 73/164 and the specifics of the action plan, greater emphasis should be placed on the numerous practical actions that need to be taken by States and other stakeholders to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping and the stigmatization and discrimination of and the incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion and belief. Most of the submissions received continue to reflect that action by Governments remains focused in large part on constitutional and legislative enactments, amendments and measures. While these are very important, the need for the improved implementation of the extensive legislative frameworks that are already in place in many countries should also be stressed. In prior reports, mention has been made of the need to implement all parts of the action plan outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of resolution 73/164 with equal focus and attention in order to address the complex issues of religious intolerance.**

85. **Therefore, it will also be important for States to take steps with respect to the training of government officials in effective outreach strategies (para. 7 (c) of General Assembly resolution 73/164); encouraging the efforts of leaders to discuss within their communities the causes of discrimination, and developing strategies to counter those causes (para. 7 (d)); speaking out against intolerance, including the advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (para. 7 (e)); encouraging the representation and meaningful participation of individuals, irrespective of their religion or belief, in all sectors of society (para. 8 (c)); and making a strong effort to counter religious profiling, which is understood to be the invidious use of religion as a criterion in conducting questioning, searches and other investigative law enforcement procedures (para. 8 (d)).**

86. **As stressed in the previous reports to the General Assembly on this topic (A/72/381 and A/73/153), States should seriously consider addressing the need to improve the overall number of contributions received and the regional geographic participation. Given that there are two separate annual reports on the same action plan – to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly – States could streamline these parallel reporting processes either in terms of content or focus, or by adjusting the reporting time frames to a biannual period in order to give a better picture of how the action plan is being implemented worldwide. In this regard, Member States are encouraged to**

³⁰ See www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24531&LangID=E.

³¹ See <https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org>.

consider thematic reports that would focus on one or two specific points of the action plan.

87. It was noted in States' contributions to the present report that religious intolerance, stigmatization, negative stereotyping, and discrimination, including issues of extremism and radicalization, are addressed through various educational measures and cultural activities, dialogues, strategic plans and public information and media campaigns, including online platforms. These are State-funded initiatives, a number of which have a youth focus or are youth-driven. While young people might present a vulnerable audience for hate speech and possible extremist activity, several submissions also highlighted that young people are also critical constituencies for countering and confronting hate speech, educating and building awareness and providing dynamic counter-narratives.

88. Some contributions by States provided information on the gender dimensions of issues of freedom of religion and belief. Several submissions noted welcome, though mostly isolated, initiatives concerning religious minorities and sexual violence, religious dress, stereotypes, domestic violence, and religious, gender and multiple discrimination. Further consideration should be given to how women are affected by issues such as religious profiling, whether they are participating and are meaningfully represented and whether they are able to manifest their religion and contribute openly and on an equal footing to society, as provided for in paragraph 8 (b) of General Assembly resolution 73/164. States are encouraged to include in their future submissions further reference to the gender dimension of discrimination based on religion or belief and the steps taken to implement the action plan with respect to women and girls.

89. States may also consider for their future submissions the complex roots of contemporary discrimination, violence and intolerance. Extreme poverty and the resulting exclusion may fuel extremism and, potentially, violent responses. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a solid foundation for tackling hate speech through the promotion of gender equality and addressing discrimination. Further consideration could be given to how the elements of the action plan such as participation, representation and collaborative networks could be leveraged to address these issues under the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (including Goals 1, 5, 8, 10 and 16).

90. Hate speech and hate crimes are manifestations of rising populism and xenophobia, discrimination, and incitement and violence based on race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or other ground. Hate speech is also proliferating and being disseminated online. Several States reported on the action that they are taking in this area through criminal law and action plans, the improved monitoring, recording and reporting of hate crimes, consolidated information-gathering, prevention, public awareness and community outreach. More systematic compiling of information on hate speech and hate crimes throughout the world is needed. The United Nations strategy and plan of action on hate speech complement all the action taken at the national and international levels by focusing on how the United Nations addresses hate speech through its programmatic work, in line with international human rights standards. Through the strategy, the entire United Nations system will work closely with States, civil society, the private sector and the media to address hate speech, including through the practical steps outlined in the action plan in paragraphs 7 and 8 of General Assembly resolution 73/164.