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Statement by Ambassador Zamir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC Member States, on the High Commissioner's Introduction to the Annual Report, under agenda item 2, during 19th Session of the Human Rights Council, (Geneva, 2nd March, 2012)

Madam President,

I have the honour to make these comments on behalf of the Member States of the OIC.

1. Under the able leadership of the High Commissioner, the OHCHR made commendable efforts over the past one year to cope with the extraordinary work load entrusted to it by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly in the wake of developments in many parts of the world. The OIC looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the OHCHR in the discharge of its mandated activities.
2. We thank the High Commissioner for introducing her annual report that reflects on important issues of human rights concern and advocacy.

Madam President

3. We would like to record our satisfaction that the first cycle of the UPR is going to be completed in this very session with 100% participation. This mechanism of the Council has been a success since it has contributed significantly in reducing selectivity and political targeting by extending equal treatment for all States. We believe that the UPR has been a catalyst for governments to bring positive changes in legislation, policy and practice. We expect that the second cycle of the UPR would provide an opportunity to the States to share their experiences and challenges in implementation of recommendations that were made in the first cycle.
4. We thank the High Commissioner for the support extended by her Office to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development and the 10th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. These two landmark Declarations deserve continuous attention of the UN human rights system. We must strive collectively to implement provisions of these two Declarations with a view to building societies that are free of deprivation, exploitation, fear, discrimination and violence.
5. We commending High Commissioner's advocacy efforts to include human rights including the right to development to the post-2015 development agenda. We believe that the right to development is a key to integrate human rights in the UN System and other international organizations in order to give human rights a development-oriented face.
6. The OIC States share the High Commissioner's concern about the rights of detainees held at Guantanamo Bay as well as her disappointment over the failure to close this detention facility not least because most of the prisoners incarcerated there are Muslims and have been kept in a situation of legal limbo for the past ten (10) years.

7. The OIC Member States look forward to the outcome report of the series of expert workshops that are being organized on freedom of expression and the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred. We expect that these workshops would guide future discussions on determining the threshold of freedom of opinion and expression and the incitement to violence.

8. The OIC attaches importance to the independence and impartiality of the Treaty bodies. We note that the multi-stakeholder process was launched by the High Commissioner to strengthen treaty body system in 2009. The OIC Member States look forward to contribute substantively to the intergovernmental process which was established by the General Assembly in this regard.

Madam President

9. The High Commissioner's statement referred to the violence and discrimination directed at individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation. The position of the OIC Group is well known on this issue. We believe that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should not act as a promoter of a notion that is outside the framework of international human rights law. In fact, there is not a single universal human rights instrument, which recognizes this issue as a human rights issue. We believe that violence and discrimination against individuals is unacceptable - period.

10. We are deeply concerned that the High Commissioner's statement did not make a reference either to the deplorable act of burning the copies of the Holy Quran or to the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Occupied Syrian Arab Golan. These two issues are of central importance to the OIC Member States and we hope that they would remain a priority in her Office's work.

Madam President

11. The OIC commends the continued commitment of the Sri Lankan government to reconciliation through the establishment of its domestic reconciliation mechanism. We strongly believe that Sri Lanka must be provided with the time and space required to continue with its genuine national endeavours towards achieving this objective, without external pressure."

12. In conclusion, we agree with the High Commissioner that the continued increase in the tasks requested of the Office has tested the limits of its ability to absorb mandates without commensurate resources. In this regard, we fully support her call for adequate resources to undertake mandated activities. At the same time, we stress that additional resources must be provided through the regular budget that would lessen her dependence on voluntary contributions or earmarked funding and hence, function in a truly independent manner. As for funds provided by extra-budgetary means, the High Commissioner must have full independence in their use and must be subject to full transparency.

I thank you.
