



**Statement on behalf of OIC by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative of Pakistan during General Debate on Agenda item 5**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> session**  
**23 March 2023**

**Mr. President,**

We reaffirm support for human rights bodies and mechanisms. In discharging their respective mandates, they must adhere to the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality, transparency and non-selectivity, as enshrined in the Institution Building (IB) package.

We are deeply concerned over the initial silence of relevant mandate holders vis-à-vis the recent intentional and public burning of the Holy Quran in three countries. The fact that their delayed press release shied away from even condemning the deliberate and provocative act is deeply disappointing.

In doing so, the mandate holders made a choice to prioritize the right of an individual to freedom of expression without any regard to the duties and responsibilities that are germane to exercising it.

We wish to underline that freedom of expression is not a license to incite hatred against 1.5 billion people who profess Islamic faith across the globe. We would like to remind the mandate holders that the Quran burning incidents clearly crossed the incitement thresholds envisaged in Rabat Plan of Action.

We wish to also express our serious concern over the attempt by mandate holders in the press release to conflate the issue of Quran burning with blasphemy laws and minority rights. We expect the mandate holders to be context specific and address the issue at hand on its merits.

The conspicuous silence of the relevant mandate holders on the unanimously agreed and UN General Assembly mandated International Day to Combat Islamophobia is also troubling. We call on the relevant mandate holders to join global efforts in countering this scourge and to raise awareness about this contemporary form of racism.

We invite the mandate holders to monitor and speak out when individuals deliberately incite hatred, discrimination and violence against people of Islamic faith. We also call on all States to evolve legal deterrence against deliberate abuse of the right to freedom of expression both to prevent it and hold violators to account.

In order to foster greater understanding and the need to combat the phobia against Islam and Muslims, the OIC reiterates its call for review of the appointment process of mandate holders in a way that reflects the diversity of various legal systems.

**I thank you.**