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40TH SESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children

Remarks by Pakistan

5 March 2019

Mr. President,

Pakistan is a multi-religious, multi-cultural, pluralistic society where people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds are living together.

2. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights and status to all citizens, irrespective of religion.

3. Observations by the Special Rapporteur's on Freedom of Religion on Ahmadiya minority community are grossly exaggerated and hence inaccurate. Regrettably, the SR has overlooked the epistemological and the legal underpinnings of the institution of Prophethood in Islam. Besides The Quran and the Traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslims scholastics of last fourteen hundred years have also extensively deliberated on this subject. By ignoring the edicts and the nuances of these rich bodies of literature, the Report has resorted to unsubstantiated polemics against my country and vulgarization of the subject to the paradigm of so called "Orthodox versus Non-Orthodox". The mandate of SR warrants a more knowledgeable discourse, which the report seems to be avoiding. The SR should adopt a scholarly and an objective approach to this complex and sensitive subject. He should rescind such incorrect information that (quote unquote) "Ahmadis being sentenced to death" for professing their faith". These inaccuracies stigmatize Ahmadi community, which is a recognized religious minority in Pakistan. Being a minority, Ahmadiyas enjoy equal rights like any other citizen. They have risen to high ranks in public and private sectors. Any

instance of discrimination and violation of their rights can be subjected to judicial scrutiny and public prosecution.

4. As regards Blasphemy Law, necessary safeguards are provided in the system against its misuse. These checks are ensured by independent judiciary, free media and vibrant civil society. The recent Supreme Court Judgment on Asia Bibi case gives useful insights to further improve the legal and administrative measures on application of Blasphemy Law in the future. Executive and Judiciary in Pakistan is committed to this endeavour.

5. We support the view of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children that sports related exploitation of children was a serious concern including sexual abuse, human trafficking, child labour and unconscionable contracts etc. We would request the Special Rapporteur to elaborate independent reporting mechanisms for cases of sale and sexual exploitation that provide child-friendly support to them.

I thank you Mr. President.