

Islamic Republic of
I R A N

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

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Statement by

Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Agenda item 64 (b):

**Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the
effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

Third Committee of the 63rd Session of the UNGA

New York, 28 October 2008

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. Chairman,

This year, the United Nations celebrates the 60th anniversary of adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even after 60 years, the Declaration is still on the front line in tackling global challenges of human rights. It is generally held that under the current circumstances, we shall still face many serious and daunting tasks in fully ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Taking this reality into account, the enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights continues to remain a top priority on the agenda of the international community for effective realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and only when all countries seize the opportunity and cooperate together, we are able to jointly promote a healthy development of the world cause for human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Strengthening of cooperation in the field of human rights helps promote mutual understanding and good neighborliness among states. After several thousand years of vicissitudes, diverse national characteristics and cultural traditions have been formed, bringing about cultural diversity to world civilization. Due to different historical, regional, religious, cultural and national particularities and backgrounds, social systems, levels of development and concepts of values, it is only natural to have different views on human rights issues. By respecting the universal principles of human rights, countries should be allowed, encouraged and welcomed to take effective measures to protect and promote human rights while taking into account their own national conditions. It is therefore neither practical nor feasible to demand all countries adopt the same development model. The international community should, on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and through dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, deepen the mutual understanding and communication so as to make exchanges and cooperation a positive factor for the promotion of human rights.

Respect for cultural diversity at the national and international level and the recognition of the fact that cultural diversity is a source of unity rather than division within the international community will indeed promote peace and security. It should also be acknowledged that cultural diversity is an asset which enriches the human common cultural heritage. Hence, advancing the policy of cultural hegemony and uniculturalism at the international level should be avoided. Indeed, persisting on cultural domination and efforts to eliminate cultural identities in the process of globalization will cause a major setback to the enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights at the international level. On the contrary, tolerance and understanding towards "others" are considered as key elements in enhancing international cooperation. The practice of listening to "others" rather than confronting or offending them should be cultivated and promoted as a culture within those performing international politics at all levels.

Globalization, as a process that may impact positively or negatively on cultural identities, can provide challenges as well as opportunities in this domain. The repressive measures in the increasingly globalizing world could take the form of disinformation through the global media including modern communication technologies. Religious intolerance including Islamophobia created as a result of aggressive media policies seek to demonize particular cultures and religions that lead eventually to hatred and exclusion. This should be prevented through an innovative and alternative plan of international cooperation among all nations.

Strengthening of cooperation in the field of human rights helps enhance fairness and efficiency of the various UN human rights mechanisms. For protecting and promoting human rights, these Mechanisms should have become important and impartial forums whereby all countries should gather together pool their wisdom and make concrete contributions to the development of the world cause of human rights. Regrettably, some countries have, over the past few years, disregarded the basic facts and politicized the human rights issues by adopting double standards. They have insisted on tabling resolutions on individual developing countries so as to turn the UN sessions into an arena for political and ideological struggles. This has not only given rise to seriously undermining the relevant UN Mechanism's fairness and efficiency, failing to solve problems, but also wasting a lot of precious resources. It is our hope that all countries will, through dialogue and exchanges on an equal footing, properly handle divergent views on the human rights issues with a view to making the session a forum that truly protects and promotes human rights.

International cooperation in the field of human rights should pave the way for the better realization of the right to development. The international community has frequently recognized the right to development as a human right. Development of Member States of the United Nations in all aspects of modern life is an instrument of peace and security. Prosperity and growth of the peoples and nations is the mainstream of promotion and protection of human rights. The international cooperation should provide necessary mechanisms to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.

Mr. Chairman,

The principles of universality, indivisibility and interrelatedness of all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights have the key role in establishing an effective structure for the implementation of international human rights instruments. Today we witness some sort of negligence about cultural rights as enshrined in International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights. We encourage the relevant bodies to devise some specific measures and initiatives to promote respect for cultural rights in the work of human rights mechanisms.

Preserving cultural and religious identity and rights of individuals requires further attention in light of current increasing attempts in cultural domination and religions defamation. The right to freedom of expression, though should be respected, yet, in terms of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, carries with it special duties and responsibilities, among them, respect of the rights or reputations of others and prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred. In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always rendered its support to the G.A resolution on combating defamation of religions as presented by the OIC, and will continue to do so at the current Session of the Third Committee. Furthermore, my delegation welcomes initiatives of the Office of the High Commissioner to hold expert seminars at the United Nations on the issue of freedom of expression and the advocacy of religious hatred.

Thank you