



**Permanent Mission
of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Geneva**

**Sixth Session
of the Human Rights Council**

**Item 3
Interactive dialogue
with the Independent Expert
on human rights and international solidarity**

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Sameh Shoukry
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt
on behalf of the African Group**

Geneva, 13 September, 2007

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Mr. president,

Allow me, on behalf of the African Group, to express our deep appreciation for the report submitted by Mr. Rudi Mohamed Rizki on "Human Rights and international solidarity".

The Group believes that the report managed to accurately address the interrelation among the three generations of Human Rights. It highlighted the fact that international cooperation is a prerequisite to achieve not only partial but also international interests. This vindicates the long-standing call by developing countries to address the issue of international development with a solidarity-based- approach.

The report emphasizes the need for the international community to accept international solidarity as the right of peoples. Unfortunately, the report shows that there is no wide-acceptance of this fact. The African Group was alarmed by the statistics contained in the report confirming that only five countries have met the target of allocating 0.7% of their Gross National Income for Official Development Assistance. A target that was set by the General Assembly of the United Nations 37 years ago.

Mr. President,

emphasized In absence of a true feeling of the unity of origin and destination of mankind, most of the Human Rights Instruments will be rendered meaningless. The role of the international community can not be confined to criticism, accusations or finger-pointing. The responsibility to protect can not be ~~propagated~~ all the time while ignoring the imperative responsibility to assist and show solidarity.

While fully supporting the recommendations contained in the report, mainly in paragraphs 22 and 46, the African Group would like to seek the views of the Independent Expert on the ways and means he deems necessary to further deepen the concept of International Solidarity in the United Nations Human Rights Instruments.

I thank you.

Egypt (on national capacity)

Mr Chairman

Mrs Jahagin

My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief for her report and presentation. As is well known, religion plays a central role in the identity of any human being and I come from a country which throughout history has attached great importance to religions and belong to a region which was the birthplace of the three monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is in this light that my delegation has examined the report at hand, and would wish to make the following comments:

We fully agree with the Special Rapporteur on the importance of protecting freedom of religion and beliefs, a matter to which Egypt historically and constitutionally and legally has been always committed. We also agree with her on the importance of inter and intra-religious dialogue as a vehicle to promote understanding and to prevent conflicts, and that such dialogues need to go beyond the mere participation of religious leaders to also involve practical activities at the grassroots level. We further agree with her on the importance of spreading human rights through education and for the dissemination of a culture of human rights as a means to promote understanding, tolerance and mutual respect between members of the various religious communities. We also share the concern expressed by the Special Rapporteur on the particular vulnerability of women, children, migrant workers and refugees to violations of their rights to freedom of religion, and to racist and xenophobic acts which in certain countries target them because of their religion and religious symbols *and as a result of messages of religious hatred & - these are accurate*

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On the other hand, we have concerns over the reference in paragraph 20 of the report calling for removal of the mention of religion in identity cards as a means to avoid any form of discrimination. In fact, such identification in the case of Egypt plays an important role in matters of personal status (marriage- divorce- inheritance - custody) particularly since the entire legal system is geared towards applying to each religious community its own law i.e Islamic Sharia for Moslems, Coptic Canon Law for Christians, and Jewish law for Jews. Therefore, the Special Rapporteur would appreciate that such identification is in no way intended as a means to discriminate but to the contrary as a way to respect the specificities of each religious community.

2

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In addition, we would disagree with the Special Rapporteur when she argues in paragraph 17 that missionary activities cannot be considered a violation of religion and beliefs of others if certain conditions are present. In this regard, we would like to draw the attention to the danger that such activities may represent if left unchecked and if not properly regulated as they may lead to inflaming religious passions and hence to the disruption of social peace and public order. In this regard, we would also like to draw the attention to what the Special Rapporteur herself mentions in other parts of the report about the fact that international human rights law allows for the imposition of limitations on the manifestations of freedom of religion and belief as prescribed by law and as necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or fundamental freedom of others.

Finally, on the issue of the relationship between freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief mentioned in paragraph 38, my delegation would like to emphasize that the episode of the offensive publication of portraits of Prophet Mohamed PBUH in the media of some countries has highlighted the damage that freedom of speech

if left unchecked may lead to, not only hurting to the religious feelings of more than a billion people but also to their freedom of religion and their right for respect of their religion. While we concur with the Rapporteur concerning the importance of freedom of the media, we also believe that this freedom should be practiced responsibly and that no human right by some should ever be invoked to negate the enjoyment by others of another human right. We therefore take note of what Mrs. S. Raye mentioned in her oral statement about ^{her report} with Sp. Raye Dardou die's ^{of the mandate} to HR Committee to consider the possibility of adopting complementary standards on the interrelated issues of freedom of exp, freedom of religion & non discrimination. We look forward to the ~~prompt~~ consideration of HR Committee of the matter.