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**STATEMENT BY PAKISTAN ON BEHALF OF THE OIC AT THE
HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON THE VDPA
22ND SESSION OF HRC
25 FEBRUARY 2013**

Mr. President,

I am making this statement on behalf of the OIC Member States.

I would like to thank the panelists for their thought provoking contributions on a day when we commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) six decades ago, the international community has come a long way in evolving a normative and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) was a landmark step as it helped to establish the normative bridge between the UDHR and all other human rights instruments.

Mr. President,

The first Article of Universal Declaration of Human Rights - "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"- signifies the correlation between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. While we reaffirm the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and equality of all the human rights, in reality the existing international order continues to be led by exceptionalising selectivity, discrimination and exploitation. Full enjoyment of human rights is possible only if diverse stakeholders guided by the common aim of promotion and protection of human rights join together to affirm their commitment to human rights in every aspect of life. Political considerations need to be separated from the promotion and protection of human rights. It is about time that we think carefully as to what is the best course of action to realize the full potential of this Council to promote and protect human rights. The OIC believes that positive and constructive engagement based on the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity as enshrined in Resolution 60/251, is the way forward if we want to avoid discord and polarisation on these vital issues.

Mr. President,

Poverty lies at the core of human rights violations. The implementation of international human rights instruments will remain an uphill struggle as long as millions of people across the globe live in abject poverty. Poverty undermines the realization of fundamental human rights and makes it difficult for victims to obtain justice and remedies in case of violations. We, therefore, believe that poverty alleviation should become the central theme of the human rights machinery, only then will we be able to move towards our shared goal of "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all". The VDPA reiterates the centrality of attaining equality of opportunity for all and underscores the responsibility of states supported by international cooperation, to create the conditions necessary for individuals and peoples to realize their aspirations for the basic human dignity that is at the core of human rights.

Mr. President,

Human rights are dynamic. While they should express absolute timeless injunctions, they need to reflect the development of history. There are emerging challenges and issues which need to be addressed by international human rights law. The growing trends of racism, racial and religious discrimination including xenophobic tendencies are threatening the multi-cultural fabric of many of our societies. Negative stereotyping or defamation of religions is a contemporary manifestation of religious hatred, discrimination and xenophobia. While the freedom of expression is sacrosanct, it must not be exploited to incite hatred against any religion and violence against its followers. This Council took a historic step in the right direction through the adoption by consensus of the OIC resolution 16/18 in March 2011 which speaks to many of these issues. We must now focus on the implementation of the commitments we have all jointly undertaken in this resolution. In doing so we will strengthen both the letter and spirit of the VDPA.

I thank you, Mr. President.