

Azerbaijan shares the explanation of vote before the vote made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the OIC. Therefore, I will be brief and confine my remarks to the following three points.

First, Azerbaijan fully supports the general concept and declared intention behind the initiative of the European Union, namely, the urgent need to effectively address all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. We also support the ~~extension of the~~ mandate of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and its extension for a further period of 3 years.

Second ^{in the} However, Azerbaijan sincerely regrets that in spite of the serious and dedicated efforts on the part of the main sponsors and other concerned stakeholders, to arrive to a more balanced and mutually acceptable text of the draft, it has not been possible for the main sponsors to take on board some of the major concerns and preoccupations expressed clearly by a large number of member and observer states of the Council.

We are convinced that if we all are genuine in our joint desire to address effectively the growing challenge of religious intolerance, we need the courage to acknowledge the persistence of various manifestations of this unfortunate and dangerous phenomenon and through joint efforts and commitment we should try to adequately address those manifestations in our work. In this regard, the increasing tendencies of deliberate stereotyping and systematic negative projection of religions, their adherents and symbols in some media and elsewhere cannot and should not be ignored or left out of the whole picture.

Finally, in the light of the above-mentioned preoccupations and because it has not been possible to reach in the tabled draft the ~~text~~ required balance, Azerbaijan will join ~~the~~ members of the Council who are going to abstain in their vote on the draft resolution contained in the document A/HRC/6/L.15/Rev.1.

Thank you.