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Islamic Republic of Iran
Geneva, 12 March 2008

Mr. President,

I would like to thank Mr. Jean Ziegler, the Special Rapporteur on the **Right to Food** for his valuable and comprehensive report, we commend Mr. Ziegler's integrity, independence and objectivity in discharging of his mandate and express our hope that the Human Rights Council could benefit from his expertise and experiences and services in future.

We also would like to commend the decision of the Government of Cuba to invite the Special Rapporteur to visit that country. This initiative vividly demonstrates the Cuban Government's cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms and shows the commitment of Cuba to the cause of human rights.

Mr. President,

Right to food is one of the basic human rights and its realization requires conducive international economic environment. Hence, we have always stated our firm opposition to imposing unilateral coercive measures and economic sanctions on independent countries and we have warned against their durable effects on the realization of economic, social and cultural right of people.

In our view, Mr. President, the very high number of people suffering from hunger all over the world, mentioned by the Special Rapporteur in his report is alarming and requires due and urgent attention by the international community. In this concern, we believe the role of the international financial institutions is highly important. Therefore, we would like to hear the Special Rapporteur's assessment on the impact of the economic sanctions and also the role of the international institutions in realization of economic, social and cultural rights and particularly the right to food.

Mr. President,

On the promotion and protection of the **right to freedom of opinion and expression** we thank the Special Rapporteur for his report but we do not share his views in the report concerning freedom of expression and freedom of religions.

According to the articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of

Racial Discrimination, we firmly believe that the freedom of expression is not absolute and should not be used to incite racial or religious hatred. We further believe that insulting religions is incompatible with the right to freedom of expression and can not be justified or interpreted under such a pretext. We particularly express our deep concern over new wave of Islamophobia through, inter alia, recent publications and reprinting of defamatory cartoons in some European countries.

Having this in mind, we expect the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion to address this specific issue in a more balanced and comprehensive manner.

I thank you Mr. President,