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**Statement by Ambassador Zamir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan,
on behalf of the OIC, on the High Commissioner's Introduction to the Annual
Report, under agenda item 2, during 16th Session of the Human Rights Council,
(Geneva, 3rd March, 2011)**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to make these comments on behalf of the Member States of the OIC.

We thank the High Commissioner for introducing her annual report that reflects on important issues of human rights concern and advocacy.

Under the able leadership of the High Commissioner, the OHCHR has been making an admirable effort to cope with the challenges posed by its ever-increasing work load. We also commend the professionalism of the OHCHR staff, both at the Headquarters and in the field. We hope that streamlining the relationship between the Council and OHCHR, through dialogue and with full respect for relevant mandates, will contribute to its enhanced performance.

Mr. President

We agree with the High Commissioner that discrimination remains an obstinate obstacle to the realization of human rights and the empowerment of the vulnerable. The OIC Member States appreciate the activities of the OHCHR to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) as well as to mark 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent. Despite the enormous efforts by the international community to address this phenomenon, we are witnessing growing instances and manifestations of discrimination, old as well as modern. The OIC is of the view that such commemorative events should be designed with a view to make a difference on the ground. One possible activity could be identification of loopholes in international human rights law that does not accommodate contemporary forms of discrimination.

The High Commissioner in her statement has also referred to discriminatory practices that are targeted against a number of vulnerable groups including those who are discriminated on the basis of their sexual orientation. The OIC Member States would like to underline the fact that such grouping has not been universally recognized. In fact, there is not a single universal human rights instrument, which recognizes this issue as a human rights issue.

We support the High Commissioner's assessment on the need to remain culturally and socially cautious in the context of globalization. We agree with the High Commissioner that people who do not share a community's history, traditions and values are often perceived negatively. Globalization does mean abandoning one's cultural and social identities. It should instead encourage peoples to live with peace, tolerance and harmony while preserving diversity in given communities. Integration must be the genuine objective. In this context, we support the expert workshops being organized by the OHCHR on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred to better understand this issue.

We concur with the High Commissioner's fears that when discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance are left to fester unchecked and unrestrained, they may

escalate into communal violence and even large-scale conflict. The OIC is of the view that the international community must take resolute steps with a view to avoiding such escalation.

Mr. President

Poverty continues to be significant obstacle both to development and realization of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, as well as attainment of MDGs. We agree with the High Commissioner that poverty and disempowerment are often underlying causes of violence and instability. Therefore, national governments must introduce home-grown and pro-development reforms in order to eradicate poverty and lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

But we think that the High Commissioner should put more emphasis on the necessity to take corrective action to redress adverse exogenous factors such as international speculation on basic commodities which undermine the right to food and trigger political instability.

The international community can play an important role in creating an enabling environment for people towards realizing their fundamental right to development. The 25th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development provides us the opportunity for the realization of this right, which reiterates the centrality of attaining equality of opportunity for all. The international community cannot overlook its responsibility to cooperate with States in providing an enabling environment. We note with appreciation that the OHCHR has planned a number of activities to commemorate the 25th anniversary with a view to enhancing understanding and dialogue on the right to development. However, the OIC Member States believe and all of us would agree that the time has come to realize this right rather than just debating it.

Mr. President

The International community is currently witnessing developments in some parts of the Muslim world with great attention. These people are asking for justice, equality and security in their communities. These demands can be fulfilled by advancing the agenda of social reforms and by advocating an improvement in the international economic environment.

We have heard with interest the High Commissioner's observations on her recent visits to various countries and regions. Her upright stance and advocacy efforts on principled human rights issues are well appreciated.

Mr. President

Regarding Human Rights Mechanism, we have also heard the High Commissioner's proposal on creating synergies with the Council's Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies as well as the need to strengthen the treaty body system that has grown two fold over a period of last six years. We believe that such proposals merit discussion in detail and look forward to participating in them.

I thank you.
