

## **Introductory statement**

### **Resolution on Freedom of Religion or Belief (L.14)**

Thank you Mr President,

I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the European Union and over fifty co-sponsors, draft Resolution A/HRC/16/L.14, entitled "Freedom of religion or Belief."

The EU attaches a high priority to Freedom of religion or belief - a fundamental human right protected by a number of international treaties, including the ICCPR - and has traditionally tabled a resolution on FoRB, both at the GA and at the HRC.

The draft which we are submitting is to a large extent based on consensual language. We have put a focus on religious minorities, which are suffering in all parts of the world from discrimination, violence and intolerance. We deliberately did not single out nor one religion or belief, nor one region. There can be no hierarchy of religions or belief, nor of victims of violence, intolerance and discrimination.

As we are witnessing acts of religious discriminations and violence in different parts of the world, the international community needs to send a strong and collective message against religious intolerance and in favour of freedom of religion or belief for all and everywhere

We have also added some paragraphs on the important role of school education, the theme of this year's report of the Special Rapporteur. We believe that education is an important tool in addressing the important challenges related to violence, discrimination and intolerance.

The version which has been distributed in the room - I am referring to the corrected version of the oral revisions - is the result of extensive negotiations. We thank all those delegations that engaged actively on the draft, in particular the delegation of Pakistan. We made a best effort to take on board as many comments as possible. Thus the

version we are submitting for action contains a number of amendments: we have added a new OP2bis on religious tolerance and a new OP5 bis emphasizing that religions should not be equated with terrorism. I am not reading out all the amendments.

We trust the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Thank you.