

**Statement of Hungary at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on  
freedom of religion or belief**

Thank you Madam President,

Hungary would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for his report which elaborates on combatting anti-Muslim hatred. We believe that the support for the cause of freedom of religion or belief is more timely than ever. Guaranteeing FoRB and combatting persecution of any religious group should be our common watchword, guiding our efforts in the domain of international cooperation. As it was highlighted by the Secretary General of the UN in his speech at the opening of this Session, we must place a special focus on safeguarding the rights of minority communities, many of whom are under threat around the world.

We can all agree that hatred towards any religious community be it Christian, Jewish, Muslim or else, goes against our common aim of promoting human rights, peace and living together. Hatred against a certain community can rise especially when ignorance or misrepresentation of that community prepares the ground for it. Therefore, in order to combat hatred it is essential to promote mutual respect and knowledge.

As a good example for this, I want to mention the Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies of Piliscsaba, established some two decades ago to continue the so-called Oriental Studies, which already had a distinguished tradition in Hungary. Another good practice that Hungary can show in the field of fostering mutual knowledge among different cultures and religions is the Stipendium Hungaricum government-funded scholarship program that allows many young people – also from Muslim-majority countries – to study in Hungary, learning about our civilization and identity, too.

One of the principles Hungarian foreign policy is based upon is to give the due respect to other countries, religions and civilizations, avoiding lecturing each other for the differences, yet working hard to find the possibility for coexistence and cooperation. Another fundamental principle consists in ensuring every person's and community's right to live in its homeland, preserving its identity. We are convinced that these principles can also help to prevent the arising of hatred towards religious communities.

In Hungary, the Fundamental Law and the relevant acts fully protect freedom of conscience and religion, these apply to any person without discriminating on any grounds. Churches and faith communities in Hungary, including the two Muslim communities, enjoy full autonomy in their operation, they are protected by the same acts and regulations. National legislation in Hungary guarantees to every citizen equal rights for access to education, health care, housing and employment, regardless of religion or belief. Historical contacts and conflicts of Hungarians with Muslim nations and countries are subject to balanced and objective evaluation, underlined by symbolic gestures, appreciated by Muslim countries. In this field, preserving the historic Ottoman-Turkish heritage has long been an important aspect in Hungary.

The protection of FoRB is one of the cornerstones of Hungary's foreign policy, exemplified by our work in aiding persecuted and beleaguered religious communities around the globe. Guided by our complex approach that holds special attention to the FoRB-humanitarian aid nexus, we have launched the Hungary Helps Program in 2017 as the Hungarian Government's unitary

humanitarian assistance program to support the victims of humanitarian crises, natural and man-made catastrophes with special but not exclusive attention on the pressing humanitarian needs that arise from the violation of religious groups' rights to live in dignity and prosperity unharmed. In line with these aims and as a newfound donor country Hungary has since 2017 provided 60 million EUR in humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance to minority religious communities affected by armed conflict, hunger, health emergencies and other severe humanitarian crises. Recipients of Hungarian aid in over 30 countries worldwide have so far included Christians of multiple denominations, as well as Yazidis and Rohingya. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has struck at the heart of many religious communities' ability to enjoy their freedom to live and prosper as members of a certain religion or belief and Hungary has responded to these challenges by stepping up its food and healthcare assistance to these vulnerable communities. In the field of advocacy Hungary has in recent years organised biannual international conferences in Budapest on Christian persecution and as an active member of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, ascribes to its five commitments, which include human rights-based approach to advancing FoRB, and to promoting other human rights indispensable for the full enjoyment of FoRB.

Madam President,

In conclusion, let us reassure this chamber that Hungary continues its full commitment toward the protection of freedom of religion or belief of all persons and communities, and we are ready to actively promote the fulfilment of this fundamental human right.