



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

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Statement delivered by

Ambassador Karl Lagatie,
Deputy Permanent Representative

EU Explanation of Vote after the Vote

**Resolution on Measures to Combat Islamophobia
[A/78/L.48]**

New York, 15 March 2024

Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States to explain our vote on the draft resolution contained in document A/78/L.48

As we stated before, the text in front of us falls short of fully meeting the requirements of international human rights law and diverges from the inclusive approach to combat intolerance, hate, discrimination and violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief appropriate in the context of the United Nations.

Firstly, as our amendment A/78/L.51 was not adopted by a small margin, the EU continues to have strong reservations against the wording of operative paragraph 2. In our view, the UN should be religion-neutral and not refer to “desecration of holy books”. Under the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, for instance, the term “desecration” is limited to religious sites only. International human rights law does not protect a religion or belief as such, or its symbols, nor does it prohibit the criticism of religions or beliefs.

Secondly, as our amendment A/78/L.51 was not adopted by a small margin, the EU continues to have reservations against the creation of a Special Envoy, as proposed in operative paragraph 3. We are concerned with the duplication of several mechanisms in place to address discrimination based on religion or belief and the financial implications. We strongly believe that a Focal Point would be more appropriate, making use of existing structures and resources, such as the current Focal Point against Antisemitism, High Representative Moratinos of the Alliance of Civilizations, whose valuable role is also recognized in the preambular section of the resolution.

For these reasons, the EU decided to abstain during the vote called on the resolution as a whole and dissociates from operative paragraphs 2 and 3.

Let me stress again that the EU and its Member States strongly condemn anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination, as we condemn all forms of discrimination, hostility or violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief. We are wholeheartedly dedicated to this cause, and remain committed to work together with the OIC and the rest of the international community towards combating it.

Thank you