

## The Singapore Declaration of Freedom of Religion or Belief

At the third International Parliamentarians' Conference on 'Upholding a Rules-Based System for Freedom of Religion or Belief', held from 30 to 31 October 2019 in Singapore, the undersigned parliamentarians and legislators from around the world:

**Recognize** that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief (henceforth, freedom of religion or belief) is one of the pillars of human rights grounded in the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of every member of the human family;

**Recognize** that threats to freedom of religion or belief are constantly evolving and the international community is witnessing contemporary threats and challenges to freedom of religion or belief which require greater political commitment and advocacy resources;

**Reiterate** that we need to strengthen and promote freedom of religion or belief as a universal and non-derogable human right, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that 'everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.';

**Recognize** that the international community, including parliamentarians and legislators need to find innovative and sustainable ways to confront and overcome patterns of existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief;

**Recognize** that parliamentarians and legislators have a special public role to advance freedom of religion or belief around the world owing to their political influence, public legitimacy and advocacy skills;

**Recall** that the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) which was formalized in November 2014 at the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo, Norway, was established to advance the right to freedom of religion or belief for all;

**Reaffirm** the Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief<sup>1</sup>, the New York Resolution for Freedom of Religion or Belief<sup>2</sup>, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Signed in Oslo, Norway in November 2014](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Signed in New York, U.S.A in November 2015](#)

In the light of the above, now, in Singapore, on 30 and 31 October 2019, the signatories **commit to pursuing efforts** in the following fields:

- ❖ Ensure that places of worship and religious sites and their congregations are protected. The recommendations of the 2019 United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites<sup>3</sup> provide some guidelines for achieving this;
- ❖ Advocate for abolishing blasphemy and apostasy legislation. Such legislation is in conflict with universally recognized human rights. Blasphemy and apostasy laws inter alia discriminate against vulnerable members of communities and severely curtail the right to freedom of religion or belief;
- ❖ Ensure the prohibition of the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence on the basis of religion or belief in accordance with the guidance provided by the Rabat Plan of Action;
- ❖ Strengthen efforts and encourage increased resources to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief while preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism; and to ensure that preventive measures in this context are not used as a pretext to suppress the right to freedom of religion or belief;
- ❖ Promote and strengthen cooperation amongst governments, members of parliament, civil society organizations, faith or belief actors, technology companies, and other relevant stakeholders to prevent violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief and other associated human rights both in the physical and digital spaces; and
- ❖ Engage with relevant national, regional and international stakeholders to promote respect for non-discrimination and non-coercion, two crucial components of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

***The following parliamentarians support this resolution in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their government, political party or any other body.***

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/12-09-2019-UNAOC-PoA-Religious-Sites.pdf>