



GROUP OF FRIENDS  
IN DEFENSE OF THE  
CHARTER OF THE  
**UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. MR. JOAQUÍN PÉREZ AYESTARÁN,  
AMBASSADOR, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,  
DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING TO COMMEMORATE THE  
“INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA”**

*New York, 10 March 2023*

**Mr. President,**

1. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honor to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations.
2. At the outset, allow us to convey our appreciation to both the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Chairman of the 48<sup>th</sup> Council of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the President of the General Assembly, for convening this Special High-Level Event to Commemorate the First International Day to Combat Islamophobia, by virtue of General Assembly resolution 76/254 of 15 March 2022.
3. Similarly, we would like to transmit also our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the OIC, the High-Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and to all other speakers in the program for their much valuable reflections on this important day in favor of diversity, respect for all religions or beliefs, including Islam, and, above all, the promotion of tolerance and peace.

**Mr. President,**

4. The Group of Friends has the strong conviction to firmly promote, preserve and defend the Charter of the United Nations, including the purposes and principles enshrined therein, as a guarantee of peace and balance in the international order, on the basis of a spirit of inclusivity, respect for diversity, national sovereignty, for the legal equality of States, for the peaceful settlement of disputes, for social progress, and for the attainment of human rights, within the framework of a reinvigorated, effective and inclusive multilateralism. One of the main pivots of political action to make these convictions a reality is promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue at all levels, as part of the mutual recognition of cultural diversity and of our common endeavors in favor of a culture of peace.



5. Since immemorial time, intolerance and the supremacist desire of some groups within cultures and religions have promoted armed conflicts and interventionist policies, aimed at imposing their convictions on, including others through violent means. The spirit of the United Nations, contained in its founding Charter, and which emanated after the victory of humanity back in 1945, is precisely the reflection of the collective desire that the peoples of the United Nations do not wish to repeat that past of exceptionalist and supremacist ideas, but, instead, desires to live in peace, in a world of dialogue and coexistence, despite any political, religious and cultural difference there may exist, and both praising our commonalities, while embracing our diversity.
6. Unfortunately, this aspiration has been tarnished by the sectarianism of some people that, based on their religious beliefs, have promoted multiple manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, hatred, persecution, racial profiling, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in order to impose their ideas and generate suffering on others. In this context, we reject and condemn all expressions of violence against people on the basis of their religion or belief.
7. Unfortunately, these expressions have multiplied in recent years, as demonstrated by an increase in the number of terrorist attacks claimed by criminal organizations that intend to justify their heinous acts by wrongly attributing them to a certain religion or belief. In this context, we cannot overemphasize the importance of ensuring that terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism never be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.
8. Having said that, the discourse of hate and exclusion, exacerbated by digital media or political expressions in favor of supremacist discourse, the most extreme of which are Nazism and neo-Nazism, which represents a major concern in the current international juncture. The international community must therefore act decisively to condemn all these manifestations of hatred and intolerance in order to both prevent and combat their derivative violence.

**Mr. President,**

9. On the first International Day to Combat Islamophobia, to be commemorated from now onwards every 15 March, the Group of Friends raises its voice against the stigmatization, prejudice and attacks against the Islamic faith, which have had manifestations of different kinds in various regions of the world, in some cases



regretfully tolerated by political sectors. According to the most recent report of the OIC Islamophobia Observatory, in the last twenty-two (22) years, this unfortunate phenomenon has ostensibly increased, particularly in some regions, continents or societies where there is no Muslim preeminence. Similarly, as a result of the pandemic, its manifestation in virtual environments has also grown considerably.

10. We stand in firm solidarity with all the victims of hatred against Islam and share the conviction expressed by its leaders and believers about the legacy of peace, empathy and progress that the practice of their religion has sown for their very own lives, spirits and societies during many centuries, while strongly advocating for their inalienable right to freely practice and profess their faith, in line with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary later this year.
11. In line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 76/157, on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief, our Group of Friends invites all responsible members of the international community to consider urgently taking the following actions, among others, in order to foster religious tolerance, peace and respect: (i) the creation of networks to build mutual understanding and promote dialogue; (ii) the promotion of educational and awareness-raising campaigns, as well as of initiatives for intercultural, interfaith and interreligious dialogue, including for public functionaries; (iii) generating mechanisms for identifying and addressing potential tensions between different religious communities; and (iv) condemning and combating impunity against actions of religious hatred; all as a set of essential actions within the framework of a national and global public policy to put an end to this phenomenon.
12. In addition, we seize this opportunity to note ongoing international initiatives aimed at advancing interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, including those promoted by the UNAOC and those foreseen in the Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace, as well as the multiple programs coming from faith-based organizations themselves, aware of the importance of coexistence in peace, in order to advance international peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. We wish to make special reference to the actions carried out by the OIC, which actively promotes global awareness of Islamophobia and the importance of generating an environment of mutual trust for the practice of different religious manifestations, on the basis of respect and mutual understanding.

**Mr. President,**



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13. To conclude, the Group of Friends reaffirms its unwavering determination to continue making political and programmatic contributions in order to ensure that, sooner rather than later, all manifestations of violence and hatred based on religion become a history of the past. Realizing this common goal will require, nevertheless, the genuine commitment of *all* States, as well as of faith-based organizations and society as a whole, in order to recognize once and for all that cultural and religious diversity enriches us and generates paths towards sustainable development, to the extent that guarantees are provided so that everyone can exercise their religion or belief freely and without impositions, in line with the spiritual call for love and coexistence that all faiths profess.
  
14. Today we say, for the common good of humanity, and mindful of the fact that we live in a community with a shared future that those things that may divide us, hurts us or keep us apart, shall never, ever, prevail, and it is, thus, our duty to foster an effective culture of peace, with tolerance, dialogue and respect, including for fundamental human rights, at its core, in order to enable us to build true links of friendship between all peoples, in spite of that diversity that for centuries and to date continues enriching our common heritage.

I thank you, Mr. President.