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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Institute for Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Denial of women wearing Hijab to their right of participation in sports competitions

The right to freedom of religion or belief stands as one of the most fundamental human rights enshrined and emphasized in the most important international human rights instruments including Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. They explicitly declare that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and consequently the right to express their religious beliefs in various ways and forms. In fact, freedom of religion comes to life and could be exhibited and reflected in the freedom of expression of religious beliefs. It is, in fact, on this basis that in the above-mentioned documents, immediately after the protection of freedom of religion, the freedom of expression of religious opinions and beliefs has been protected. In the meantime, and in this context, people's covering could be considered as one of the forms of the expression of their religious belief. There is no doubt that in many cases what people choose to wear is rooted in their religious beliefs, and one of the most obvious examples is the Hijab of Muslim women. Islamic dress and Hijab is one of the teachings of Islam that many Muslim women practice as a religious duty. That is why the ban and denial of the right of women for choosing the type of their clothing are considered a violation of the aforementioned Articles and of human rights obligations which amount to violation of the freedom of expression; and the law banning the Hijab in sports competitions in France stands as one of those violations. This is while the two mentioned important international instruments require the signatory countries to eliminate the conditions leading to the imposition of this restriction, which is in fact an imposition of discrimination, and to provide adequate social and legal opportunities for individuals to fully enjoy and exercise their rights. On the other hand, according to Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979, the application of any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the right to choose the type of clothing for women is considered discrimination and is prohibited under the Convention. In return, the Convention commits States Parties to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, and agree to pursue, by all appropriate means and without delay, a policy of eliminating discrimination against women.

The Institute for the Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), which has been working, for non-profit purposes, for the protection of women's rights for many years, emphasizing the guarantee of social freedoms and the beliefs of Muslim women, argues that measures such as banning women from wearing Hijabs in sports in France leaves a negative impact on their participation in the social and economic arena. We strongly urge the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to address and prioritize the ongoing discrimination against Muslim women in non-Muslim countries in his agenda, and to require and ensure that those governments fully respect their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in fulfilling the international obligations of those countries. Meanwhile, we welcome any initiative by the international community to improve the state of respect for religious freedom around the world, and call for the peaceful coexistence of the followers of all Divine religions.
