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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Letter dated 16 June 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you the text of the Bukhara Declaration adopted by the participants of the International Forum “Dialogue of Declarations”, held on 19 May 2022 in the city of Bukhara, Republic of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 74 (b).

(Signed) Bakhtiyor **Ibragimov**
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 16 June 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Bukhara Declaration

On 19 May 2022, representatives from government and civil society, scholarly experts and religious leaders from 10 countries gathered in the city of Bukhara for a multi-faith dialogue that focused on protecting and promoting freedom of conscience or belief of everyone, everywhere, advancing multi-faith tolerance, understanding and respect, and countering violent extremism.

Bukhara is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. It has been at the crossroads of several civilizations, religious communities, cultures and belief systems. Bukhara is a historic centre of education and science. It has been the birthplace of or home to distinguished scientists and ulema for over 1,000 years, and graduates of Bukhara's madrasahs have made an invaluable contribution to the development of Islamic theology. Moreover, Bukhara gave the Muslim world the great hadith scholar Imam al-Bukhari, to whom belongs the famous collection of hadiths – Sahih al-Bukhari.

Over the centuries, many Bukharans created a culture of mutual understanding and mutual respect within the city and the region. The Government of Uzbekistan embraces this heritage as it develops laws and policies regarding religious freedom and social harmony. In Uzbekistan today, believers from 16 confessions seek to live out their faith, in part by living in peace and harmony with each other. As the largest faith community, the Muslims of the country feel a great responsibility for preserving and protecting the smaller faith communities, while ensuring equal citizenship, harmony and, as a result, stability in the country.

From this ancient and contemporary perspective, we, the undersigned, appeal to our brothers and sisters in humanity, of all faiths and none, in this multi-faith call to action pursuant to practical initiatives and programmes that build mutual understanding and mutual respect. Such a call is not only the right thing to do, according to our different belief systems, but it is in the self-interest of each of us – for where there is more understanding and respect, there will be less conflict, religious or otherwise.

Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights forever proclaims: “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.”

According to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, endorsed by resolution 5.61 of the UNESCO General Conference of 16 November 1995: “Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.”

Education is critical in this effort, which the UNESCO Declaration also recognized, stating in article 4: “Education is the most effective means of preventing intolerance. The first step in tolerance education is to teach people what their shared rights and freedoms are, so that they may be respected, and to promote the will to

protect those of others. ... Education for tolerance should aim at countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others, and should help young people to develop capacities for independent judgement, critical thinking and ethical reasoning.”

To achieve these goals practically through the citizens of the world, we, the participants of the forum, agree on:

Encouraging an open and constructive discussion of social, cultural and religious processes, as well as the expansion of multi-faith and intercultural dialogue in national, regional and international contexts;

Highlighting the need for all religions to commit to strengthening multi-faith dialogue (and partnership), especially between and among religious leaders, such that resulting multi-faith programmes serve all of society according to a deeper understanding of universal human values, and as a function of one’s own deeply held beliefs;

Acknowledging the importance of education and training – always with the practical goal of equipping citizens with the competencies and skills of mutual engagement in common projects that serve all of society – in fostering religious tolerance and human rights, promoting mutual understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures, religions and beliefs, and the elimination of any form of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief;

Increasing educational activities and establishing new mechanisms – not least a new curriculum – to promote multi-faith and intercultural dialogue that results in mutually respectful engagement and practical programmes, building unity and solidarity, and raising citizens’ awareness of the importance of religious freedom and peaceful coexistence within and among members of different faiths and national communities;

Stressing the importance of implementing the special UN resolution “Enlightenment and religious tolerance” (December 2018) adopted at the initiative of the Republic of Uzbekistan, aimed at the development of culture, peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and human rights;

Considering it necessary to preserve religious establishments and places of worship as they are monuments to the history, culture and traditions of peoples and societies, as the special cultural and historical significance of such objects is recognized by UNESCO; and

Agreeing that the promotion of the above principles, policies and practices contributes to the realization of the goals of universal peace, by encouraging friendship, by advancing social justice, and by protecting human rights.

We, the participants of the forum, also want to make clear that we:

Denounce increasing intolerance and intensifying acts of violence based on religion or belief, which have victimized individuals from all faiths and none around the world;

Condemn the propaganda of religious intolerance and discrimination, which spreads through traditional information media resources (print, audiovisual or electronic) and through the Internet and social networks;

Declare, unequivocally, that terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations cannot and should not be associated with any religion, civilization, nationality, ethnic group or belief system;

Commit to protect, without reservation, everyone’s right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which 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;

Recall the State's primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, the transparent rule of law, and the strengthening of tolerance pursuant to mutual respect. The secularity of state institutions is inconsistent with hostility towards religion, nor should religious groups threaten the secular structure of the State or the secular part of society; and

Affirm the position of the UN Human Rights Committee that legal restrictions on the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief are only permitted through such restrictions that are necessary to ensure public safety, order, health and moral principles or to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and if such restrictions are proportionate to the object sought to be protected.

We, the participants in the "Dialogue of Declarations," sign this document:

Emphasizing that the entire international community should respect and protect the basic human right that everyone, regardless of their place of residence, has the right to profess any religion or not to profess any, nor should they be forced to accept a faith not of their choosing, and has the right to manifest their religion or belief subject to the limitations in international law;

Remembering that citizens of States worldwide also have the right and responsibility to bring the values of their belief system into discussions of public policy and international diplomacy;

Indicating our strong commitment to the principles articulated in the Marrakesh (December 2016), Jakarta (December 2017), Potomac (June 2018), Punta del Este (December 2018) and Makkah (May 2019) Declarations and the special UN resolution "Enlightenment and religious tolerance" (December 2018) – all of which attest to the importance of the religious factor in the life of modern society and call for representatives of all religions to promote the development of a culture of tolerance and respect for human dignity in societies; and

Suggesting that this Dialogue continue, worldwide, creating future conversations about implementing the above principles and goals.

Adopted on 19 May 2022 by the participants of the International Forum "Dialogue of Declarations" in the city of Bukhara, Uzbekistan.