

**Statement by Ambassador Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to the United Nations at the High-Level Meeting to
commemorate the "International Day to Combat Islamophobia"
on 17 March 2021, from 09:00 am to 11:00 am**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

Assalam -o-Alaikum. Good morning to you all.

I join others in thanking you, Amb. Abarry, for organizing today's high-level event.

I wish to thank the OIC membership and the OIC Secretary General for their efforts in raising awareness against Islamophobia. The decision of the 47th OIC CFM to observe the 15th of March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia is indeed an important milestone in this regard.

I thank the UN Secretary General for his statement reiterating the UN's commitment to support efforts in this regard, and against all forms of racism and xenophobia.

Excellencies,

Islamophobia is on the rise worldwide, spewing acts of hate-crimes against the Muslims. And in this pandemic, the situation, has taken a turn for the

worse; Muslims worldwide are increasingly the targets of abhorrent hate crimes and stereotyping.

Bangladesh itself has been a witness to the scourge of Islamophobia. We are currently hosting over a million Rohingya Muslims who are victims of the worst forms of racial and religious hatred in their homeland Myanmar. The systematic racism and Islamophobia that prevails in Myanmar must be eliminated to end the plights of the Rohingya Muslims once for all.

Bangladesh's commitment and respect for all faiths and religions is a constitutional one, and we actively work on ensuring communal and religious harmony and an inclusive society. We take pride in our tradition of religious diversity and harmony, based on mutual respect.

Excellencies,

To the Ummah, the importance of curbing Islamophobia cannot be overemphasized. Allow me to reiterate a few ideas:

First: our efforts need to be holistic and inclusive. We need to take concerted measures at different levels including on legal, cultural, religious, academic, and political platforms to dispel misperceptions about Islam. Bigotry has to be tackled at its root. We need to adopt a whole of society approach, involving all communities and nations.

Second: The initiatives taken by the OIC to address Islamophobia, such as promoting interfaith dialogue and religious harmony are welcome initiatives. These efforts need to be more widely disseminated and effectively executed. Islam is a religion of peace and inclusiveness. That message needs to be disseminated. The social media platforms could be utilized in a more innovative manner in this respect.

Third: To ensure inclusivity and ownership beyond OIC and from the larger membership of the international community, we should continue our dialogue with other inter-governmental bodies such as the UN, EU and other regional organizations. We wish to see this day observed with wider participation in future.

Finally: We must engage all sections of our society, especially the youth to fight the menace of Islamophobia globally. The power and imagination of youth could bring about transformative changes in the way others look at Muslims. OIC can organize a 'Youth Forum' dedicated to fighting Islamophobia.

To conclude, Excellencies, I would like to reiterate Bangladesh's support to all efforts to combat Islamophobia and all forms of racism and intolerance.

I thank you.
