

## **Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue**

### **Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

**3 March 2021**

#### **Statement by Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries**

Thank you Madame President.

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country Iceland.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his presentation and underline the importance of our collective efforts for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, work that is as important now as ever with reports of rise in religiously motivated violence and discrimination.

Madam President,

We take note of the report, which we look forward to examine in detail.

It is crucial to tackle widespread discrimination, hatred and unfair and illegal treatment of Muslims in all parts of the world, including State policies that penalize or marginalize Muslims.

Let me underline the commitment of our countries against any form of violence, discrimination, intimidation or harassment, based on a person's beliefs or the perception thereof. As part of our efforts to build tolerant and inclusive societies we have implemented national policies to counter any such action.

Finally, Madame President, as the Rapporteur highlights, the term islamophobia has at times been unfairly misused, including to target legislators and human rights activists such as those supporting women's human rights and others. How can we work together to ensure that our efforts to tackle hate directed at Muslims do not jeopardize free speech and advocacy?

I thank you.