



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - Geneva

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**55<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Freedom of Religion or Belief**  
*5<sup>th</sup> March 2024*  
**Delivered by Ambassador Vincenzo Grassi, Permanent Representative of Italy  
to the United Nations in Geneva**

*Mr. President,*

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the EU and reiterates its support for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

Italy thanks Dr. Ghanea for her report and shares her call for greater efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief, foster interfaith and intercultural dialogue, protect religious and belief minorities and combat hate speech while upholding all human rights.

As properly underlined in the report, religious hate speech that does not constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence should be actively addressed through robust measures and policies but not criminalized.

In line with longstanding priorities of Italy's foreign policy, we staunchly champion the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief and of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in our bilateral relations and in all relevant multilateral fora, including through the *UPR*. We also promote them through development cooperation programs, including the "*Fund for direct support for Christian minorities persecuted in crisis areas*".

While strongly condemning all forms of intolerance and discrimination, and in particular violent attacks directed against persons, based on religion or belief, Italy will continue to promote dialogue and cooperation among different religious leaders and communities, aiming at fostering mutual understanding, preventing conflicts and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies in line with the Agenda 2030.

*I thank you*