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**Initial Conceptual Framework**

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# **International Treaty to Ban the Political Abuse of Religion**

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This script has been developed by leading officials, legislators, and prominent UN experts and is presented as an initial conceptual framework to illustrate the scope and structure of a possible treaty. It is not intended as a final legal text. The formal treaty will be negotiated and drafted exclusively by the adopting Member States of the United Nations.

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## Preamble

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### The States Parties,

**Determined** to put an end to all political abuses of religion that violate equality, justice, and human rights,

**Committed** to coordinated action to meet the challenge of ending the abuse of any religion to foster intolerance, division, and discrimination for political ends,

**Obligated** to reform domestic laws and regulations to eliminate existing and potential discrimination on grounds of religion or belief within their jurisdiction,

**Recognising** that the use of religion to serve political agendas is a major cause of many of the most brutal local, regional and international conflicts,

**Acknowledging** that previous attempts to prevent the abusive mixing of religious belief with the responsibilities of states and governments have been divisive, confrontational, and often counterproductive,

**Recognising** the need for clear global standards to prevent political actors from fomenting inter-faith strife or exploiting sectarian grievances when dealing with religious sensitivities, which can empower extremist parties,

**Understanding** that the dangers come not only from religious extremists, but also from violent retaliation against minorities and innocent people from the same religion as the extremists,

**Recognising** that the absence of a clear international standard allows some political and economic interests to manipulate religious teachings to serve their own gains and agendas,

**Realising** that all existing international conventions related to human rights principles and values are still being sidelined by national legislation in many countries,

**Believing** that the international legal toolkit should be strengthened by enacting a new international treaty to combat specifically all forms of religious oppression without compromise and without offending any religious identity or providing ammunition to extremist groups,

**Affirming** the urgent need to adopt international standards to ban all political abuses of religion that undermine equality, all forms of religious discrimination, religious exclusion, and all restrictions on freedom of religion or belief,

**Believing** that the aforementioned standards can build global consensus, without any interference in religious teachings,

**Confident** that all responsible governments should wish to endorse these fundamental principles as obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

**Emphasising** the utmost respect for all religions to deny extremists any claim that they are defending their religion, thus removing a key recruitment tool by which the weak or vulnerable are attracted to terrorism,

**Confident** that a non-confrontational approach will encourage many countries, entangled with religious discrimination, to join the world consensus on justice and equality for all,

**Believing** that a clear, universal standard will encourage more moderate, tolerant political ideals and represent a major step towards greater respect for human rights and relief for those who suffer from religious oppression,

**Intending** to make concerted efforts to obtain the formal adoption of this Treaty by all states, and determined to work unwaveringly towards the promotion of its universalisation,

**Committed** to supporting the establishment of a global monitoring mechanism to report on all political abuses of religion by providing verified data that would empower governments, organisations and individuals to apply political pressure on those who continue to commit such abuses,

**Welcoming** the support of international organisations and influential individuals from the spheres of religion, politics, business, and the arts to promote this Treaty,

**Have agreed as follows:**

### **Article 1 Equality in Respect and Dignity**

Each State Party shall prohibit all abuses of religion that:

- A. **Undermine** equal respect and dignity for all people, regardless of their religious identity.
- B. **Prevent** individuals from engaging in lawful activities under its jurisdiction because of their religious identity.
- C. **Impose** restrictions or pressures on individuals based on their religious identity.

### **Article 2 Equality in Rights**

Each State Party shall prohibit all religious discrimination that uses the authority of the State to:

- A. **Exclude** individuals from holding positions in the public or private sectors because of their religious identity.
- B. **Deprive** individuals of privileges or legal rights because of their religious identity.
- C. **Restrict** individuals from legitimate economic or business activities because of their religious identity.
- D. **Deny** individuals equal access to judicial or administrative procedures on religious grounds.
- E. **Prevent** individuals from participating in public or virtual spaces because of their religious identity.

### **Article 3 Equality in Duties**

Each State Party shall prohibit all religious discrimination that uses the authority of the State to:

- A. **Impose** additional taxes or fees on individuals because of their religious identity.
- B. **Enforce** additional requirements or duties on individuals because of their religious identity.

## **Article 4**

### **Religious Exclusion**

Each State Party shall prohibit:

- A. All forms of exclusion of individuals from public institutional activities because of their religious identity.
- B. All groups and movements that seek to impose unilateral, exclusionary religious agendas at the local or international level.
- C. All political and social activities that promote religious animosity or exclusion.
- D. All forms of hate speech targeting other religions or beliefs.

## **Article 5**

### **Freedom of Belief and Practice**

Each State Party shall prohibit all:

- A. Restrictions on freedom of religion, belief, or worship.
- B. Religious practices that violate the rights of other individuals.
- C. Religious coercion and forced conversion.
- D. Harmful religious practices imposed on individuals because of their religious identity.

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**\* Articles 6–14 are illustrative only. Their final form will be determined through intergovernmental negotiation.**

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## **Article 6**

### **Ratification and Depositary**

Implementation of this Treaty shall be carried out in accordance with international obligations

- A. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is the designated Depositary of this Treaty.
- B. Each state ratification shall be deposited with the United Nations Depositary.
- C. This Treaty shall not be subject to reservations.
- D. All States Parties undertake to exert the utmost diplomatic effort to persuade non-party states to endorse this Treaty and to work strenuously towards its universalisation.

## **Article 7**

### **Implementation and Compliance**

- A. All States Parties shall adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures to prevent any violation of this Treaty by governmental institutions, individuals, or groups of people under its jurisdiction or control.
- B. Each State Party shall report to the United Nations Depositary on their national implementation measures within 90 days of ratification.
- C. Each State Party shall submit annual updates to the Depositary within 60 days after the end of each calendar year.

- D. Each State Party shall designate, consistent with international privacy and human rights standards, competent authorities to monitor online conduct to prevent violations of this Treaty.
- E. All States Parties shall consult and cooperate with each other regarding the implementation of the terms of this Treaty.
- F. All States Parties shall participate in international measures to address any violation of this Treaty, wherever it occurs.
- G. Each State Party may request clarification or investigation into any suspected violation of this Treaty.
- H. The Secretary-General of the United Nations may establish a fact-finding mission to investigate any credibly suspected but unconfirmed violation of this Treaty.

## **Article 8**

### **International Cooperation and Assistance**

- A. In fulfilling its obligations under this Treaty, each State Party is committed to provide, and entitled to seek, assistance from other State Parties.
- B. All States Parties are requested to provide information to the Depositary on any domestic laws, regulations or practices in any country that are inconsistent with this Treaty.
- C. Each State Party may seek advisory services and technical assistance from the Secretary-General of the United Nations or from other States Parties to help reform domestic laws and regulations in order to stop existing violations or prevent potential violations of this Treaty.

## **Article 9**

### **Amendments**

- A. At any time after the entry into force of this Treaty, any State Party may propose amendments to the United Nations Depositary, which shall circulate them to all States Parties and shall seek their views on whether an Amendment Conference shall be convened to consider the proposal.
- B. If a majority of States Parties notify the Depositary within 30 days of circulation that they support further consideration, the Depositary shall convene an Amendment Conference to which all States Parties shall be invited.
- C. Any amendment to this Treaty shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the States Parties present and voting at the Amendment Conference.
- D. The Depositary shall communicate any amendments adopted to the States Parties.
- E. The adopted amendments to this Treaty shall enter into force immediately upon adoption for all States Parties, and shall be recognised as establishing universal standards binding also on non-party states.

## **Article 10**

### **Duration and Withdrawal**

- A. This Treaty shall be of unlimited duration.
- B. Any State Party wishing to withdraw from this Treaty shall give a full explanation of the reasons for its withdrawal to the Depositary and to the other States Parties.
- C. Such withdrawal shall take effect six months after receipt by the Depositary of the notification of withdrawal.

D. Withdrawal shall not release any State Party from obligations arising under this Treaty.

**Article 11**  
**Costs**

The costs of meetings of the States Parties, the Amendment Conferences, and any fact-finding missions shall be borne by the States Parties in accordance with the financial regulations of the United Nations.

**Article 12**  
**Global Monitor**

- A. States Parties undertake to support the establishment of a global monitoring mechanism to formulate early-warning and preventive strategies.
- B. The global monitor shall keep a register documenting all threats to the coexistence of religions.
- C. The monitor shall also document all violations of this Treaty worldwide.
- D. The monitor shall provide regularly updated and verified data regarding alleged violations to all States Parties and coordinate international measures to address such violations.
- E. The monitor shall issue semi-annual public reports on violations and on the compliance efforts of States Parties and non-party states.
- F. The monitor shall initiate, organise, and coordinate lawful efforts by States Parties, organisations, and individuals to apply lawful diplomatic and political pressure on those who commit violations to cease their transgressions.

**Article 13**  
**Entry into Force**

- A. This Treaty shall be open immediately for signature by all states.
- B. This Treaty shall enter into force after the 40<sup>th</sup> state ratification and shall apply to all State Parties.
- C. This Treaty shall also apply to non-party states once it has been ratified by 90 or more states.
- D. Any State Party or the Secretary-General of the United Nations may request that the United Nations Security Council consider any situation involving alleged violations of this Treaty by a State Party or by a non-party state.

**Article 14**  
**Authentic Texts**

The Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish texts of this Treaty are equally authentic.

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**\* This document is intended solely to support policy discussion and does not constitute a proposed legal text for adoption.**

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