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Durban Review Conference

Summary record of the 6th meeting

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President: Mr. Wako (Kenya)

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High-level segment (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

High level segment (agenda item 3) (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Riachi Assaker** (Lebanon) said that the soul of her country lay in the meeting of Islam and Christianity, of East and West. Lebanon, home to 18 distinct communities, had proved its unshakeable attachment to the great human values of democracy, human rights, dialogue and tolerance. But the peace to which it aspired, like all the peoples of the Middle East, was hard to achieve. Peace could only prevail in a context of justice and respect for international law. It could only be born through the patient dismantling of all the walls of hatred and through the mutual recognition of legitimate sovereignties. Lebanon therefore reaffirmed its support for the Arab peace initiative and underlined the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State on their territory.

2. In the face of new challenges, such as the proliferation of regional conflicts, international terrorism, economic uncertainties and religious incitement, which bred racism and discrimination, solidarity among States was essential, as all were responsible, be it through action or omission. Eight years after the Durban Conference, the progress made in implementing the commitments made on that occasion had not yet proved commensurate with those challenges. What was still needed to bring all nations together behind the ideals set out in the Durban Declaration and the outcome document that the Review Conference had just adopted? The members of the international community must understand that enough was enough. Enough suffering and tragedy; enough occupation, racism, discrimination and intolerance. All must join forces to bequeath a legacy of dignity to future generations.

3. **Mr. Al-Wahaibi** (Oman) welcomed the adoption of the Review Conference's outcome document and called on States to continue to fight racism and discrimination in a spirit of solidarity. Oman had ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2002 and had submitted an initial report on measures taken at national level to eliminate those evils. Article 17 of its Constitution prohibited any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour of skin, ethnic origin, religion or social circumstances. There were also various similar legal provisions. Thus, the Criminal Code made incitement to religious fanaticism punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment. Oman had long ago committed itself to establishing peace and justice. Tolerance, solidarity and fraternity were values firmly anchored in its culture, and a series of measures and regulations had been adopted to consolidate the rights of all without discrimination. Oman also supported the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Human Rights Council on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

4. **Mr. Strohal** (Austria) said that all countries were affected by racism and discrimination, which in its different forms was found worldwide, but that the international community was determined to combat those evils. Already almost half a century ago, it had adopted a specific instrument to that end, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and it today reaffirmed this determination within the framework of the Review Conference. It was therefore totally unacceptable that a State should have taken advantage of that platform to express ideas which ran completely counter to the objectives in view. Incitement to hatred had no place anywhere, least of all within the United Nations.

5. Many Governments, along with civil society and international organizations, contributed actively to fighting racism and discrimination. In that regard, Austria applauded the contribution of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations and other independent mechanisms, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency, the European

Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Throughout the world, however, men and women continued to suffer from racism and discrimination. Today, States were gathered together not to quarrel but to assess the implementation of the commitments assumed in Durban. It would have been useful, on that occasion, to have focused more on examining specific examples of effective measures or policies in that field. The outcome document recently adopted provided a good framework to continue the fight.

6. Austria had spared no effort in following up the Durban Declaration. One of its priorities was training public officials and raising their awareness of cultural diversity. Several regions had formulated guidelines for integrating migrants and managing diversity. Difficulties remained, however, particularly in view of how diversity was perceived in Austrian society. Diversity — cultural, ethnic or religious — unquestionably enriched a society, but could also be used to foster hatred and intolerance, which could lead to the destruction of entire communities, as testified by the Holocaust.

7. Following the example of numerous other countries, Austria had a broad legal and institutional framework to fight discrimination, but implementing such mechanisms was not enough. The responsibility of all States went further: they must eliminate all trace of discrimination and intolerance, particularly through educating people in tolerance and respect for others. That should be the aim of all.

8. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, by reaffirming that everyone had the right to a life of dignity and providing for a comprehensive set of measures, represented a milestone in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Eight years later, the time had come to take stock and share the experience gained. Undeniable progress had been made, but it was not enough. Throughout the world, people continued to be victimized because they belonged to a particular national, ethnic or religious group. Discrimination was also taking on new forms, particularly with regard to Islam and religious minorities. It was being spread by new means, such as the media and the Internet. More worrisome still, it was sometimes legitimized by political platforms. Migrants were particularly targeted, especially in terms of wages, housing and education, often in the face of indifference from the authorities. The prohibition of discrimination on paper often remained a dead letter in practice.

9. Racism and racial discrimination were the antithesis of everything humanity stood for, and there was no shortage of examples of their detrimental effects. It was therefore necessary not only to prevent them, by stemming any racist propaganda or incitement to hatred, but also to punish them, so as to avoid any sense of impunity among the perpetrators. It was also necessary to ensure that freedom of expression, an essential element of any democratic and tolerant society, was not abused for propagation of racist prejudice or religious intolerance.

10. Bangladesh was determined to combat discrimination in all its forms. The principles of equality and non-discrimination were enshrined in the Constitution, and the Government's efforts in that field were supported by an independent judicial system, vigilant media and an active civil society. Bangladesh was also party to most major human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and it did its utmost, despite its limited means, to fulfil its international obligations. On principle, it supported all persecuted communities struggling for their legitimate rights, and therefore unequivocally condemned the policies and practices of the occupying power in the Middle East.

11. Bangladesh called on States not to be discouraged by the absence of certain countries from the Review Conference and invited them to reaffirm their collective will to

implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, so as not to disappoint the countless victims of racism and racial discrimination and ensure that the promise of dignity and justice for all might become a reality.

12. **Mr. Hiroki** (Japan) welcomed the recent adoption of the outcome document of the Review Conference, which would allow for the development, on the basis of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of 2001, of new measures to combat racism effectively throughout the world. Given that the motto of the Review Conference was “unite against racism”, it was regrettable that certain speakers had used the meeting to make divisive statements that ran counter to its objectives.

13. Since 1946, the Constitution of Japan stipulated that all people were equal before the law and prohibited any discrimination in political, economic or social relations. Based on those principles and other domestic laws, Japan was committed to fighting various forms of discrimination and promoting acceptance of diversity and other cultures. Every year, in December, the week preceding International Human Rights Day was dedicated to awareness-raising campaigns, one of the aims of which was to promote respect for the rights of foreigners living in the country. In addition, a programme to assist integration had been operating since 2007 and human rights counselling offices for foreign nationals had been set up in major cities. With regard to minorities, the Diet (Japan’s parliament), had in June 2008 recognized the Ainu people as an indigenous people of the island of Hokkaido, and an advisory panel of eminent experts had been asked to make specific policy recommendations to promote their interests. Furthermore, the Government was also taking steps to prevent ever more powerful information technologies from being used to flout human rights and promote racial discrimination.

14. As a State party to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, Japan reaffirmed its determination to combat discrimination and to make every effort to build a society in which each person was respected as an individual, not only on its own territory but throughout the world. It hoped that the Review Conference would be a new step in carrying out the task with which the whole international community was charged.

15. **Mr. Black** (Jamaica) expressed deep disappointment that the progress anticipated following the 2001 Conference had not materialized. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance persisted, in a world confronted by other major problems such as the economic crisis and political instability. The failure was due to the lack of sufficient political will to fully implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It was therefore essential for the Review Conference to address shortcomings and to renew the impetus to combat racism and racial discrimination. It was particularly regrettable that, rather than serving to refocus attention on those problems, the Conference should have been politicized to the point that its objectives were being compromised. Jamaica called on all States to respect the letter and the spirit of the Durban process and to work together in finding ways to move it forward.

16. Certain issues addressed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action were of special importance to Jamaica, in particular the pernicious legacy of slavery and colonialism, which contributed to poverty and underdevelopment in the countries concerned. In that context, the paragraphs relating to reparations assumed a particular importance and should therefore be applied without delay. The international community must honour the memory of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery as part of the fight against racism and racial discrimination. In that regard, the decision to erect a permanent memorial at United Nations Headquarters in New York, taken on the initiative of several Caribbean countries, was welcome. It was also necessary to remember all the other victims of discrimination and look for ways of fighting the insidious new forms of the

practice. It was also essential to give special protection to the rights of those who were most vulnerable to it, particularly indigenous peoples, minorities, women and children.

17. Respect for human rights and the inherent dignity of every individual remained the essential foundation of freedom, justice and peace among peoples and nations. The international community should seize the unique opportunity offered by the Review Conference to draw attention to the dangers of racism and intolerance and to continue to fight those threats, in order to create a better world for future generations.

18. **Mr. Vukčević** (Serbia), welcoming the efforts made to enable the Review Conference to adopt its outcome document, said that Serbia, as a multi-ethnic and multicultural State, where several religions coexisted, participated actively in the Alliance of Civilizations, a United Nations forum aimed at better understanding between East and West. Through various educational and cultural activities, Serbia was also committed to remembrance of the Holocaust.

19. The Serbian Government recognized the need to resolve the complex issue of promotion of the Roma status, primarily at the national level but also in cooperation with other countries confronting similar challenges. Serbia was currently presiding over the Decade of Roma Inclusion, officially launched in 2005, which brought together countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe wishing to work to eliminate discrimination and reduce the unacceptable distinctions between Roma and the rest of society.

20. Ever since the democratic changes in 2000, Serbia had embarked on an all-embracing process of legislative reform. In March 2009, a comprehensive law on the prohibition of discrimination had been passed, which punished discrimination and any unjustified distinction or unequal treatment based, *inter alia*, on race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. In order to overcome the negative consequences of the past, Serbia, situated in a region that had lived through a difficult period in the last decade of the twentieth century, was firmly committed to establishing responsibility and punishing war crimes and crimes against humanity, through cooperation at international, regional and national level. As a country with the largest number of refugees in Europe, it was committed to finding sustainable solutions for refugees, based on the principles embodied in the Sarajevo Declaration.

21. It was incontrovertible that the fight against racism and discrimination should avoid any politicization or application of double standards. The international community, especially the United Nations, should strongly condemn certain situations wherever they occurred, and particularly the numerous human rights violations — notably ethnic cleansing and internal displacement — perpetrated over many years against non-Albanians in the province of Kosovo and Metohija. Added to those atrocities, Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government had unilaterally declared the independence of their province in 2008, which had been recognized by a number of countries, contrary to international law. As the great defender of human rights Martin Luther King Jr. had said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere".

22. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that, eight years on from Durban, the Review Conference provided an opportunity to take stock of what had been achieved, but also to look for reasons that had stood in the way of implementing commitments. The fight against discrimination and intolerance was a collective responsibility, and the atrocities committed against minorities, whether migrant workers, women or children, were a flagrant attack on the honour and dignity of human beings and the equality of human rights.

23. The historic changes that had taken place in Nepal after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006 and the promulgation of the Provisional Constitution in 2007 had led to profound socio-political transformation in the country. The peace process guaranteed the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all citizens, without any

discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, ethnicity, language or ideological conviction. Nepal, a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual country, now recognized the right of all to participate on an equal footing in all spheres of public life and was striving to build a participative democracy. The assembly charged with drafting a new democratic constitution, which the people had elected on 10 April 2009, was representative of the various communities, since women accounted for 33 per cent of its membership, ethnic and indigenous communities for 33 per cent and Madhesis for 34 per cent, 50 of its members being Dalits.

24. Nepal was party to 18 international human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; it had voted in favour of adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and had ratified the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (No. 169). The Government had adopted policies to promote equality, justice and non-discrimination and instituted a system of monthly allowances for all groups of endangered ethnicities.

25. Nepal considered that tolerance and harmony were the only way to overcome animosities, promote coexistence and establish dignity and justice for all. In order to fully implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, it proposed: to create a network of national institutions; to ensure respect for pluralism, diversity and difference; increase investment in the social sector (education and health); protect minorities and work towards their empowerment; strengthen institutions to promote non-discrimination; make use of available human rights instruments and mechanisms; share experience and best practices; work together with all stakeholders, including employers, trade unions and social movements; fight poverty and exclusion; enhance the scale of international assistance; and use information technology to disseminate the message of harmony and unity in diversity. The road ahead was long and full of obstacles, but through conviction and resolve, it would be possible to collectively create a secure future for all.

26. **Ms. Kečo-Isaković** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) underlined the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina, a multinational and multicultural country, was home to Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats, together with members of 17 national minorities, and 4 major monotheistic religions. Its Government had committed itself to ensuring the highest level of protection of human rights through the implementation of domestic and international legal standards. It therefore condemned any form of racial discrimination and any propaganda inciting intolerance and discrimination, and recognized the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups in society, in particular refugees, displaced persons, women, children, minorities and migrants. A Roma council had also been established with a view to promoting tolerance and respect for difference. A national minorities council and a gender equality agency had been created, along with an inter-religious council responsible for promoting dialogue among religions, bringing together representatives of the four main religious communities. Convinced that success in the fight against racial discrimination would be achieved through education, the national authorities were making significant efforts to address the problem of segregation in schools.

27. Recognizing the vulnerable situation of migrants, Bosnia and Herzegovina had ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Committed to the fight against human trafficking, it had established the Office of the State Coordinator for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Immigration, along with mechanisms to monitor the application of minimum standards for the protection of victims of trafficking. The authorities were also making efforts to improve the position of persons with disabilities.

28. As the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was the cornerstone in the fight against racism, Bosnia and Herzegovina had

accepted a request for a visit by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

29. **Mr. Himanen** (Finland), associating his country with the statement made by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, said that racism and racial discrimination were a global scourge that still affected millions of people worldwide, including in Finland, and considered it necessary to refocus on the original objectives of the Review Conference. In that regard, he strongly condemned statements made since the start of the Conference giving expression to anti-Semitism or racism.

30. Finland welcomed the adoption of the outcome document, while considering that much remained to be done, particularly to benefit migrants, Roma, indigenous people, women, children and sexual minorities. Over the past decade, the European Union had made significant advances at the normative and policy levels in fighting racism. It had adopted legislation banning discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin in work, education and access to goods and services and had issued other texts against discrimination of any nature (religion, age, sexual orientation, disability), whether direct or indirect.

31. There was a general need to improve specific implementation of international standards, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, at national level, to learn from past activities in that field, to encourage new initiatives and to exchange best practices.

32. It was only by adopting a comprehensive set of measures at national level that progress could gradually be made towards a more equal society. Finland had taken various measures, particularly in the areas of monitoring, mainstreaming and positive action. In cooperation with civil society, the Ministry of the Interior had launched a project to improve the equality of official statistics on discrimination; it would be impossible to have an effective policy in that regard without exact knowledge of the situation on the ground. Another project was aimed at developing a national system for monitoring hate crimes. Lastly, the authorities were working in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and indigenous minorities to ensure respect for the rights, including linguistic rights, of the Sami.

33. **Mr. Doualeh** (Djibouti) said that history had clearly shown the danger of racism in all its forms: the debilitating racial discrimination imposed by slavery and colonization had been intrinsic to the collective African experience; apartheid had been the most execrable modern form of institutionalized racism. That historical context had forged the determination of the African continent to participate in developing a collective project to fight racism, which had taken the form of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. That document, which reflected the ethical and political responsibilities of States, was a precious educational tool with a special legitimacy.

34. The Review Conference provided an opportunity to assess the progress achieved in implementing that important document. While the advances made in introducing legislation, policies and programmes to fight racism around the world could only be welcomed, it should also be recognized that there were strong trends towards a renewal of racism and that the fight against racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance continued to face immense and acute challenges. The situation required even greater mobilization and vigilance so as to radically reverse the powerful tendencies observed. The outcome document that had just been adopted responded to that need.

35. It was, however, disappointing to note that the negotiating process that had led to the drafting of the document had witnessed the emergence of attitudes and positions that had almost compromised the adoption of a consensus text on a subject that should not have given rise to such serious conflicts of opinion. The fact that the negotiations had become

such fertile ground for misunderstandings and inextricable confusions was a source of deep concern to Djibouti.

36. Djibouti wished, in concluding, to reaffirm the importance of implementing the dual strategy to combat racism adopted by the former Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: political and legal, on the one hand, and cultural and ethical, on the other. Any dialogue between cultures should be able to respond, without unnecessary ambiguity or rank-ordering, to the question of whether multiculturalism was a promise or a threat.

37. **Mr. Amirbayov** (Azerbaijan) welcomed the fact that, despite some uncertainty, the Review Conference had been a success overall. Unfortunately, even in the twenty-first century, the world still faced racism and xenophobia. No region was immune. After two devastating world wars, some Governments, politicians and ideologists were still promoting harmful ideas, particularly with regard to territorial claims between States, which often led to foreign military occupation, ethnic cleansing and other genocidal practices, as well as the creation of flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. Azerbaijan was still experiencing the aftermath of such tragedies.

38. At the same time, new and dangerous tendencies were emerging, such as attacks against religions, particularly Islam, which was equated with terrorism and violence. The international community and the United Nations human rights machinery could not remain indifferent to the negative stereotyping and stigmatization of religions. Nothing could justify considering a whole civilization or religion to be hostile or dangerous. Azerbaijan also condemned all discriminatory and intolerant acts committed in the name of religion or belief.

39. Freedom of expression, a precondition of genuine democracy, played an important role in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It was a universal value, not limited to a specific region. No right, even that one, should be realized to the detriment of others.

40. Eight years after the Durban Conference, although progress had been made, challenges remained; contemporary forms of racism were even gaining ground. It was therefore necessary to strengthen existing mechanisms. Only political will on the part of all could translate the commitments assumed into reality. Azerbaijan supported the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Human Rights Council on complementary standards and the creation of an Observatory on racism. His country had made a financial contribution to the Review Conference, seeing it as a new point of departure, and thereby demonstrating its commitment to combating racism. At national level, the promotion of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue had been made State policy. As a capital of Islamic civilization for 2009, Baku intended to foster religious harmony.

41. **Mr. Mundaraín Hernández** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the roots of racism could be found in the ideology of racial supremacy preached by colonizers and the imposing of a particular social model on colonized peoples. In a period of economic crisis, it was the vulnerable groups in society, migrants in particular, who were the victims of discriminatory racial practices. For Venezuela, racism was the negation of the fundamental principles that had inspired the Revolution. The cornerstone of Bolivarian socialism was equality between men and women, which was enshrined in the Constitution, a text that also proclaimed the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of the country. Venezuela, which was now engaged in a true revolution in aid of the poor, the underprivileged and the excluded, fought the passive racism that sought to exclude the most disadvantaged sections of the population from any form of participation and marginalize them.

42. Venezuela denounced the reigning culture of impunity for crimes perpetrated by the powerful (slavery, genocide, racism and inciting hatred), to which was now added the global economic and financial crisis. It was deeply regrettable that several States had decided not to attend the Review Conference. The outcome document adopted the previous day responded to most of Venezuela's concerns, without reflecting all its aspirations. Conscious of the difficulty of debating issues that affected the poor but were the responsibility of the powerful, Venezuela stressed its agreement with stating that racism, slavery and racial discrimination were crimes against humanity; that the Jewish people had been victims of the Holocaust; that freedom of expression did not mean freedom to incite hatred, especially not religious; and that the Palestinian people were the victims of racism by the Israeli Government.

43. **Mr. Rodriguez** (Uruguay) said that the Review Conference, a key stage in the fight against racism, should not become a setting for exacerbating difference but rather for dialogue to enable the progress made to be assessed and to determine what more could be done. The outcome document produced by the preparatory process could not, by its nature, satisfy all points of view, but it was a balanced text that shared out responsibilities. For Uruguay, the importance of international multilateral institutions was incontrovertible. It was as a result of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action that the Uruguayan State had been able, in collaboration with civil society, to make progress with its legislative and institutional plans to fight racism, which it had proclaimed to be of national interest and which it recognized must include countering the invisibility of large sectors of the population and combating poverty.

44. In preventing racism and combating this evil, education was of prime importance from the earliest years of life, together with freedom of expression, which no historical, cultural, religious, economic or security consideration should be allowed to curtail. At the same time, it was important to ensure that any expression of intolerance, any stigmatization, or any incitement to racial, religious or other hatred or violence was avoided.

45. Uruguay had adopted various domestic measures to combat racism, particularly the compilation of disaggregated statistics to allow for diagnostic analysis, the creation of institutions, with particular emphasis on the situation of Afro-descendent women, compensatory measures for Afro-descendents expelled under the dictatorship regime, and the adoption of a law on migration. Uruguay, while accepting the form of the outcome document adopted by consensus, considered that national, regional and other measures were essential to take the process further.

46. **Archbishop Tomasi** (Observer for the Holy See) said that globalization, while bringing people together, did not create of itself the conditions for constructive interaction and peaceful communion: racism persisted, new forms of exploitation appeared (trafficking in children and women, ill-treatment of migrants, social and political exclusion, forced marriages and persecution of Christians because of their beliefs), and the current economic crisis was affecting the most vulnerable groups in society most of all. The still-latent temptation of eugenics (the use of "superfluous embryos"), excessive security measures and practices (that exacerbate irrational fear of foreigners) and non-respect for human rights in the name of the legitimate fight against terrorism were further causes of alarm.

47. The Review Conference offered an opportunity to set aside difference and reject once more any theory of racial or ethnic superiority. National and international standards were indispensable in reaching that goal, but they must be accompanied by an awakening of consciences, and fear and the spirit of domination must give way to openness to others, fraternity and solidarity. The role of education and the media was irreplaceable in that respect. Moreover, some educational systems should be reviewed so as to eliminate all expressions of discrimination.

48. In the fight against racism, faith communities, particularly the Catholic Church, played a major part, hence the need to ensure respect for freedom of religion, which should not be sacrificed in the name of freedom of expression. Faced with such challenges, it was necessary to improve strategies to combat racism and, to that end, inculcate moral and spiritual values, strengthen the effectiveness of existing mechanisms, achieve universal ratification of major instruments against racism and discrimination, and explicitly condemn through national legislation all forms of racism and intolerance. The Holy See deplored the fact that the Review Conference had been used for the expression of extreme and aggressive political positions that ran counter to the spirit of the fight against racism.

49. **Mr. Jazairy** (Algeria) associated himself with the declaration made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of African States. He underlined the paradox whereby the international community was undeniably moving in the direction of greater democracy while, at the same time, perennial racism was becoming more marked even in the so-called “advanced” democracies. The phenomenon of racism, on which new parameters such as culture and religion now impinged, was apparent in the areas of work, housing and integration, but also in the dehumanizing of the other, which was nothing less than a social cancer in a time of economic insecurity, the fight against terrorism, and global recession.

50. Algeria, which, since its independence, had abolished the legislation of the colonial power enshrining discrimination between Europeans and Muslims and had established a foreign policy of supporting people under colonial domination as an extension of its domestic priorities, deplored the fact that nations that were supposedly democratic and respectful of human dignity continued to pillage natural resources from the territories they occupied. Stronger measures should be taken to fight such predatory practices. Furthermore, the incidents at the opening ceremony of the Review Conference should not be allowed to obscure the racist arrogance that had led to the latest massacre of a thousand civilians in Gaza. Past and present tragedies called for reparations, and there was a need to remedy weak national legislation and gaps in international instruments, which favoured a resurgence of racial discrimination.

51. Having participated in negotiating the outcome document of the Review Conference in a spirit of non-confrontational consensus-building, the Algerian delegation was disappointed that certain rich countries had boycotted the proceedings and that one large country that had been extremely successful in fighting racism on the ground had not sent a message of hope to participants. It was important to defeat the racist-inspired manipulations that sought to discredit multilateralism.

52. **Mr. Burayzat** (Jordan) said that Jordanian society had never known the phenomena of racism and racial discrimination, as Arab and Muslim culture were global and humane in outlook and the traditional values of the country were tolerance, respect for others and openness to the wider world. Those values and the principle of equality were at the heart of the country’s Constitution and all its laws, thereby strengthening social cohesion and harmony, both nationally and internationally.

53. In the face of growing racism and the spread of hatred against monotheistic religions, Islam in particular, there was a need to examine the reasons for such a trend, especially poverty, falling standards of living, exclusion and marginalization, and to place the Millennium Development Goals at the heart of national economic policies. Jordan welcomed the various initiatives taken after 2001 that had contributed to combating racism, particularly the Alliance of Civilizations, the Amman Message (a declaration made by King Abdullah II in 2004) and also the “A Common Word” initiative launched in 2007 by Jordan to bring Muslims and Christians closer together.

54. Welcoming the novel approach of the new President of the United States aimed at improving relations between the West and the Arab world, which rejected the vexatious

theory of a clash between civilizations and sought the peaceful coexistence that would lead to international stability and security, Jordan hoped that that development would be followed by actions and underlined that the fight against racism was more than a legitimate cause: it was an absolute necessity for global stability.

55. **Mr. Borisovas** (Lithuania) rejected in the strongest possible terms the allegations made by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and shared the assessment of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that the speech had clearly gone beyond the scope of the Conference and was intended to undermine the efforts of the international community to fight racism.

56. Lithuania, fully committed to that fight, stressed that international standards provided a sound basis for all countries, and that their full application was one of the most important elements in preventing and combating the scourge of racism. For the fight to be effective, freedom of opinion and expression must be respected and, in particular, the media must be free to pursue their activities, while ensuring respect for freedom of religion and conviction. Establishing any kind of hierarchy among human rights or according special treatment to a particular region or country would only lead away from the common goal of guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of all. The Review Conference was in itself an important milestone in the fight against racism, but would have had an even greater impact if all countries had participated in it.

57. **Mr. Verros** (Greece) associated himself with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. As a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, Greece had witnessed the numerous difficulties that had had to be overcome in arriving at a balanced text, which it had been possible to adopt by consensus, and hoped that it would serve as a reference point for all Governments in shaping national policies and action plans to fight racism and discrimination. Greece believed deeply in multilateralism and had always given its staunch support to the United Nations. It could not under any circumstance accept an infringement of freedom of expression. A culture of human rights should replace the culture of hate.

58. The Greek Government had made combating racism one of its priorities. It had modified its legislation and administrative structures to take account of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 2001. In 2005, it had enacted a law on applying the principle of equal treatment, in line with the relevant European Union directives. Its human rights policy promoted cooperation and consultation with all actors concerned, including NGOs and existing institutional mechanisms.

59. **Mr. Phuangketkeow** (Thailand) said that it was vital to present a united front against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, which affected all countries and regions. While it was essential to learn from the lessons of the past and never forget the victims of injustice, it was also necessary to look to the future in implementing effective prevention strategies and being vigilant to new forms and manifestations of racism and discrimination.

60. Certain developments since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had changed the international context of their implementation. The spread of extremist ideologies in the name of religion and religious intolerance in many regions of the world had led to further discrimination and violence. The line between freedom of expression and inciting hatred had been one of the issues at the centre of the preparatory work for the Review Conference and the drafting of the outcome document. Although no limit on freedom of expression could be accepted, that freedom must nevertheless be exercised with responsibility and tact so as not to cross that line.

61. Although the Review Conference had been mainly devoted to racial discrimination, other forms of discrimination should not be forgotten, particularly those based on disability

or gender, which were equally intolerable. Humanity was rich in its diversity and dialogue was the pathway to progress. Thailand welcomed the consensus reached on the draft of the Review Conference's outcome document, which showed that it was possible to work together in spite of differences.

62. **Mr. Tan York Chor** (Singapore) said that no amount of international meetings and instruments could stem racism and discrimination unless individuals and societies adopted an attitude of respect and responsibility towards one another. Divisions based on race, language, culture and religion ran deep in society and surfaced under stress. The idea of race was often obscured by pretending that races did not exist or by sheltering behind the principle of equality. However, political correctness did not teach people how to live together, nor how to play their role in society.

63. It was striking that, in the age of communication and information, some people knew so little about others, their way of life, their culture and their beliefs. The media's taste for the sensational and their tendency to caricature in order to sell news did not help. Stereotypes contributed to baseless fears and a distorted view of cultures and religions. Given their influence, the media had a special responsibility and a duty to be objective. Understanding was the fount of tolerance.

64. Singaporean society was made up of many communities living in harmony, even though they did not share the same cultural heritage or practise the same religion. The Government strove to guarantee justice and equality for all, regardless of race, language or religion, and ensured that everyone shared in the fruits of progress, because that was where the conditions for social harmony lay. In its legislation, it also sought to prevent incitement to racial or religious hatred.

65. Singapore was a member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, composed of 10 States that differed greatly from one another, whose Charter was based on the principle of unity in diversity, represented both in recognition of common values and in respect for the different cultures, languages and religions of the region's peoples. Singapore hoped to be able to contribute to promoting tolerance and dialogue in the global arena.

66. **Ms. Thompson** (Costa Rica) stressed that the fight against racism was universal. Pursuing that shared objective had, however, given rise to disagreements, sometimes lively. It was therefore essential to preserve multilateralism and diplomacy as a means of bridging gulfs and finding solutions that satisfied everyone. Costa Rica therefore deplored the fact that the Review Conference had been used for purposes that were contrary to the spirit of Durban and that language inciting hatred had been employed.

67. Costa Rica applauded the preparatory work for the Conference, which had made it possible to adopt the outcome document by consensus. The text included a range of elements that were of great importance to progress in the fight against terrorism and showed a fair balance, taking into account the various interests expressed by delegations. Expressing profound regret that certain countries had decided not to take part in the Conference, Costa Rica invited them to rejoin the process as soon as possible.

68. **Mr. Sun Suon** (Cambodia) said that it was imperative to reinvigorate efforts to fight racism, a phenomenon that remained a global reality, and underlined that non-discrimination was a fundamental principle of international humanitarian law. The international community must overcome its differences and strengthen existing mechanisms and measures to promote equality, dignity and the rights of all peoples through greater cooperation, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

69. Having been torn apart by tragic events, Cambodia had rebuilt itself by finding a path to peace and reconciliation. The Government was working to promote development and improve the situation in all spheres, including human rights. National legislation

prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, religion or sex. The Constitution guaranteed equality before the law and equal opportunities for all citizens and provided for positive measures to benefit minorities and disadvantaged groups. In its social policies, the Government was working to maintain a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect between communities. Its strategic plan for education (2006–2010) emphasized a culture of peace, respect for human rights and democratic principles. Keen to protect and promote the interests of people belonging to minorities, it had created a national council on ethnic and demographic issues, reporting to the Council of Ministers.

70. Cambodia was party to all major international human rights instruments related to the theme and aims of the Review Conference. In 2009, it had submitted its periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

71. Cambodia welcomed the fact that participants in the Review Conference had reached a consensus on the draft outcome document and reaffirmed its commitment to participate in global efforts to improve relations between peoples and nations. Only through collective endeavours could progress be made.

72. **Mr. Kastberg** (UNICEF) drew attention to the vulnerability of children to the scourges of racism, discrimination and xenophobia. Based on their colour or ethnic origin, some children were condemned from birth to know poverty, malnutrition, exploitation and violence, to be unable to go to school and to live in horrible conditions.

73. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Durban process had facilitated positive dialogue between civil society and Governments and had enabled 18 countries in the region, with United Nations support, to take measures to benefit Afro-descendants and indigenous communities. When Governments came to choose how to allocate resources in the face of the economic crisis, it was essential to ensure that access for Afro-descendent, indigenous and migrant children to health care, education and social services was not sacrificed. It was also essential for those children to be able to take pride in the contribution of their communities to the societies in which they lived, and it was in that perspective that UNICEF had supported publication of the Manual of Afrodescendants of the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as consultative groups of indigenous and Afro-descendent leaders.

74. While preparing to celebrate 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the bicentenary of the independence of most republics in the region of the Americas and the Caribbean, the international community must ensure that those events provided an opportunity to strengthen actions to improve the situation of millions of children and young people who continued to live in poverty and exclusion.

75. **Mr. Moaiyeri** (Islamic Republic of Iran), exercising his right of reply with regard to the statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the representatives of Argentina, Sweden, the United Kingdom, France and Austria on the speech delivered by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the high-level segment of the Durban Review Conference, said that his country strongly rejected the unwarranted and unsubstantiated references made in those statements and considered them to be meritless, unacceptable, and out of order.

76. It was much to be regretted that referring to historical facts and realities on the ground concerning the formation of an illegitimate regime and the massacres it had committed in decades of occupation had prompted the Norwegian Minister and a few others to make such remarks. The principles of human rights should lead to the systematic condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the killing of innocent people, particularly women and children.

77. It was regrettable that the right to freedom of expression was so wrongly and narrowly defined by some in the interests of masking the harsh realities experienced

particularly by Muslims in one part of the world or directed against their beliefs in other parts.

78. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran protested strongly at the deplorable, irresponsible and unwarranted statements of certain high-ranking United Nations officials concerning the speech by the Iranian President on the grounds that they contradicted well-established United Nations norms and practices prohibiting any partiality or any comments on the positions and statements of Member States, let alone Heads of State. Moreover, all Member States and the United Nations Secretariat should respect and safeguard at all times the status and dignity of Heads of State and United Nations Member States. Lastly, as to substance, the speech by the Iranian President had contained no accusation, nor any incitement, contrary to what had been alleged in the statements in question.

79. The Iranian delegation requested that the text of its right of reply should be included in the final report of the Conference.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.