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## Durban Review Conference

### Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 20 April 2009, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Wako ..... (Kenya)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

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

*Statement by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran*

1. **Mr. Ahmadinejad** (President of the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, if lessons had been learned from the wars, slavery, occupations, massacres and struggles for independence of preceding centuries, that had claimed millions of victims all over the world and, in particular, the atrocities and crimes committed during the two world wars in the previous century, a glimmer of hope would have been discernible. However, the victors had set themselves up as conquerors of the world, disregarding the rights of other nations and imposing oppressive laws and international arrangements.

2. In particular, the rationale for granting the right of veto to the five permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council, when it had been established as the highest decision-making body for safeguarding international peace and security, was not consistent with the recognized principles of justice, equality before the law and respect for human dignity and the dignity of nations. For sixty years that body had helped to stabilize and support the racist regime of occupation established after the Second World War in Palestine. It was deeply regrettable that a number of Western governments and the United States had committed themselves to defending the racist perpetrators of genocide, while free and enlightened minds throughout the world condemned the aggression, brutality and bombardments suffered by civilians in Gaza.

3. The Islamic Republic of Iran condemned the actions of the previous American administration and its allies, that had been carried out without international authorization or mandate in two countries of the region, namely, Iraq and Afghanistan, and deplored the real reasons for the invasion of Iraq by the United States, as well as the intervention by the United States and its allies in Afghanistan, which had led to an increase in the illegal cultivation of narcotics. Both of those operations were clear evidence of egocentrism, racism, discrimination and of the violation of the dignity and independence of nations.

4. Similarly, the current global economic crisis had its root causes in the United States, which had imposed, with complete disregard for its own and other populations, inequitable economic rules designed solely to protect the interests of the rich and powerful and a monetary and financial system that was not subject to the necessary international monitoring mechanism. By not taking a principled approach based on the pursuit of perfection and respect for human values, it had opened the way to racism and compromised the peaceful coexistence of nations. Racism was undoubtedly a manifestation of deeply rooted ignorance. It was therefore necessary to return to spiritual and moral values and, for the international community, to seek to raise collective awareness of that phenomenon in societies where such awareness was lacking.

5. The time had come to seek to put an end to the abuses of the Zionists and to encourage governments in their struggle to eradicate racism and move towards reforming the existing international mechanisms. The simple fact of boycotting the Durban Review Conference — a true testing ground that would shape public opinion worldwide through its decisions — was a sign of support for the blatant expression of racism. However, in order to defend human rights it was primarily important to defend the right of all nations to participate on an equal footing in all international decision-making processes and to reform the international organizations and the way in which they operated.

6. In view of the imminent risk of collapse of the major political and economic structures and the worsening global economic crisis, change at the world level was necessary. The inequitable, unjust and oppressive management of world affairs must be replaced by collective management, based on noble, humane aspirations and respect for the

interests of nations. The scientific and technical capabilities and communication technologies that had contributed to the common understanding of the global society had laid the groundwork for a common system. Now all thinkers, intellectuals and policy-makers must resolve firmly to pursue the right path.

7. He emphasized that it was possible to improve the current world situation, but that all countries would need to cooperate in order to do so. His conviction that defending the rights of nations against racism was a shared responsibility had led him to participate in the Review Conference. Moreover, in view of the ineffectiveness of the current political, economic and security systems at the international level, he advocated a return to fundamental human values, justice and respect for the rights of all people worldwide and, in that connection, called for urgent reform of the Security Council and the international financial and monetary systems.

*Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway*

8. **Mr. Gahr Støre** (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway) said that he regretted that the Iranian President had exercised his freedom of speech, which was fundamental to human rights, in a manner that compromised the very purpose of the Review Conference and placed the Islamic Republic of Iran outside the framework of the carefully negotiated draft declaration, which had enjoyed broad consensus. That document, which articulated the need to defend freedom of expression, also aimed to protect people and individuals against the scourge of racism, discrimination and incitement to hatred.

9. The point of departure of the Conference was the pressing common obligation to fight racism. However, past experience had shown that it was not an easy matter to reach agreement on a common text. The Durban Declaration, which had been adopted by near-consensus in 2001, had served in Norway as a template for the development of detailed action plans to combat racism and discrimination. During its involvement in the preparatory process for the Review Conference, Norway had been motivated by the desire to produce a text that strongly and unequivocally deplored racism; one that avoided calling for restrictions on the defamation of religions, as human rights obligations were intended to protect individuals, not religions; one that contained nothing that would infringe freedom of expression as defined in articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; one that recognized the role of the free media in combating racism, while recalling the responsibility to refrain from incitement to hatred and violence; and one that was universal in scope and did not single out the Middle East as a special case in point. Lastly, the text should not attempt to rewrite history.

10. As the fight against racism and racial discrimination was of the utmost importance and as the Durban Review Conference should send a strong and comprehensive message to that effect, Norway was prepared to accept the text that had been produced as it stood, as that text met its expectations. Placing the fight against racism in the wider context of all the struggles in which humanity must now engage in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation, climate change or even poverty, he emphasized the importance of seeking common ground for understanding, and of continuing to do so in a multilateral framework. The fact that some States had decided to withdraw from the process at the last minute was, therefore, regrettable. Those who had made a point of defending freedom of expression could not opt for a strategy of non-attendance, leaving the way open to those who held opposite views. A conference alone would not solve the problems of racism and discrimination: rather, the way in which every individual behaved and interacted with others would be the determining factor.

*Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa*

11. **Ms. Zuma** (Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme

of Action in 2001 had a powerful symbolic value for Africans, who had experienced slavery, colonialism, apartheid and genocide. That document served both as a means of restoring the human dignity of the victims of racism in its many forms and as a solid basis for the elaboration of national or regional strategies. In that context, the Group of African States commended the steps taken in a number of countries to launch a reparation and reconciliation process. It also welcomed the decision of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to erect a memorial to the victims of slavery at United Nations Headquarters.

12. Despite the progress that had been achieved since 2001, racism, xenophobia and intolerance were still rife in many parts of the world. The international community must remain vigilant and demonstrate genuine political will in the face of those phenomena. Much remained to be done to honour the commitments undertaken in Durban with regard to development. Poverty, social exclusion and economic disparities, exacerbated by the current financial crisis, were having a severe impact on millions of people worldwide.

13. The fight against terrorism, which had been stepped up since the attacks in 2001, had led to the erosion of civil liberties and an increase in racial profiling, at times in defiance of the rules of international law. However, it was possible to reconcile anti-terrorist action and the fight against racism if care was taken not to consider terrorists as representing broad religious or cultural communities.

14. The Group of African States was concerned at the rise in incidents of incitement to racial and religious hatred. It recalled the lessons of the past, in particular those of the Nazi regime in Germany and the genocide in Rwanda, and warned against any abuse of freedom of expression for the purpose of inciting hatred. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance were still counted among the causes of armed conflict throughout the world. The international community must continue to work to end impunity and prosecute those responsible for mass violations of human rights, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

15. Racism and racial discrimination were also expressed through the persistent oppression of women and girls, whereas no society could develop its full potential without empowering women to act and decide for themselves.

16. The Group of African States remained deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and called on all parties to demonstrate moderation and continue to negotiate with a view to finding a peaceful settlement.

17. It was regrettable that some Member States had chosen not to participate in the Review Conference, disregarding the considerable efforts made throughout the preparatory process to reach consensus. The proposed draft declaration reflected the views of all delegations and was a satisfactory compromise. Some participants would not have been able to attend the current meeting had it not been for the struggles against slavery, colonialism and apartheid. It was important today to reaffirm the unity of humanity in its diversity.

*Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon*

18. **Mr. Eyebe Ayissi** (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon) noted with regret that implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had fallen short of expectations. Racism and discrimination remained common, in particular with regard to women, indigenous peoples and migrants. The latter were often perceived as being a burden on society or even as posing a threat. Many States, confronted by difficult circumstances, gave in to the temptation to resort to racial, ethnic or religious profiling or restrictive migration policies. Many were finding it increasingly difficult to ensure respect for the dignity of persons as well as social harmony, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Moreover, minorities were usually the first targets of collective expressions of discontent, not to mention violence. The current crisis was only exacerbating that situation.

19. The preparatory process for the Review Conference had been marked by differences and disagreements that delegations had, nevertheless, overcome in order to reach a consensus text. Cameroon's participation in that process demonstrated its commitment to combating the scourge of racism. As it had already ratified most of the international instruments that guaranteed equality and non-discrimination, Cameroon was now working to align its domestic legislation with those instruments and to raise the profile of the recommendations made by the treaty-monitoring bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

20. The current meeting offered an extraordinary opportunity to combat racism and xenophobia effectively. It was essential to do everything to ensure that the meeting was a decisive and historic turning point, characterized by a genuine collective will to promote peace, tolerance and dialogue. No country in the world was free of racism; everyone had "dirty hands", to use the words of Jean-Paul Sartre. Collective and united action was needed in order to avoid the pitfalls already encountered in 2001.

*Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania*

21. **Mr. Membe** (Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania) emphasized that the elimination of racism was a gradual process and that the international community must take resolute collective action to address the many persistent forms of discrimination and intolerance through national, regional and international measures. It was regrettable that a number of Member States had decided not to participate in the Review Conference and it was to be hoped that the withdrawal of European Union countries, among others, was only temporary. While acknowledging the usefulness of the existing follow-up mechanisms to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the need to increase their effectiveness with a view to enhanced synergy should also be emphasized.

22. Tanzania had fulfilled its reporting obligations as a State party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Moreover, it had enacted a number of laws to incorporate the provisions of those instruments relating to racism, racial discrimination and intolerance into domestic law. It had made significant progress with regard to the protection of human rights, strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality and access to social services. Lastly, it had taken in and continued to take in numerous refugees and was preparing to naturalize some 170,000 long-term Burundian refugees living in Tanzania.

23. It was clear that the draft outcome document would not be easy to implement, in view of the disagreements that had arisen at the drafting stage. Progress in dealing with racism and other contemporary evils could only be achieved through constructive dialogue and concerted action. Recognizing and providing compensation for past injustices was a necessary step in that direction.

*Statement by the Minister of Defence, Justice and Security of Botswana*

24. **Mr. Seretse** (Minister of Defence, Justice and Security of Botswana) said that the Review Conference was of particular importance for the countries of Southern Africa, which had experienced institutionalized racism. For them, it provided a new opportunity to celebrate the abolition of apartheid while also serving as a painful reminder of the tragic consequences of silence and failure to act in the face of injustice.

25. The 2001 World Conference against Racism had been based on the common desire to remember and learn lessons from the mistakes of the past. The commitments to which the Conference had given rise had made clear the need to unite in the search for common solutions. The implementation of those commitments should be considered today in that spirit. The Review Conference should not be used divisively as a platform to demonize particular States.

26. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recommended concrete measures and guidelines for the development of national policies and programmes and emphasized strengthening national human rights institutions, prevention and advocacy. In that context, the importance of education should be re-emphasized.

27. The struggle against racism and discrimination was not the responsibility of States alone. It required profound social change, to which the media, civil society and the private sector must contribute. Moreover, it was a global undertaking. The preparatory process for the Review Conference had unfortunately shown that some differences remained and that there was a certain lack of political will. The time had, therefore, come for participants in the process to reassert their unity and strong commitment to the spirit and the letter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

28. Botswana had been founded on the rejection of racism and the promotion of tolerance. As a party to the relevant international instruments, it had always cooperated with the United Nations system. It had endeavoured to submit all reports requested by the relevant treaty bodies and to implement their recommendations to the best of its ability.

29. Political commitment to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was essential; the Conference follow-up mechanisms must maintain that momentum. At the national level, States must amend their legislation to incorporate the provisions of the international instruments and translate the principle of non-discrimination into binding norms.

30. Consensus on the issues at stake was far from having been achieved, as was attested by the absence of some countries, but it was encouraging that it had been possible to draft a balanced outcome document. The international community must not fail in its struggle against racism, as failure would imply that human beings were no different from animals. Botswana was convinced that good could prevail over evil, provided that countries combined their efforts and engaged in genuine dialogue. Participants in the Review Conference must endeavour to unite stakeholders in a common vision, inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

*Statement by the Minister for the Promotion of Racial Equality of Brazil*

31. **Mr. Santos** (Minister for the Promotion of Racial Equality of Brazil) said that his country, which was actively involved in the fight against racism, had endorsed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in 2001 and had renewed its commitments in 2006 and 2008, at the regional conferences. It had participated in the preparatory process for the Review Conference. Fighting racism was not a matter of choice but a moral and ethical obligation. In the Durban Declaration, States had recognized that there were no differences between human beings, only political manipulation of the concept of race for purposes of segregation.

32. The draft outcome document before the Review Conference was a compromise between positions that had seemed irreconcilable. It did not single out any particular country and deplored contemporary forms of racism and discrimination, as well as the increase in persecution directed towards certain religions. It did not merely reflect national

positions but demonstrated commitment to the very essence of the multilateral system. It did not deny the achievements of 2001 and was not an obstacle to further progress. To abandon the negotiating process, as some countries had done, was to reject dialogue and change and to stray from the long road travelled since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

33. Brazil, for its part, would never cease to contribute to the struggle against discrimination, no matter how many countries joined it in that enterprise. Brazil was a multi-ethnic, multiracial nation: half of its population was of African descent and it had more than 180 indigenous peoples. The Government's commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action demonstrated its respect for that diversity and its desire to address the invisibility of the victims of racism and discrimination. One of the first follow-up measures that it had taken after the Durban Conference had been to create the Special Secretariat on Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality, which was responsible for coordinating the struggle against racism and discrimination against people of African descent, indigenous peoples, Roma and other vulnerable groups. The Government was also strongly committed to the fight against religious intolerance, in particular with respect to the practitioners of religions of African origin. Moreover, it had adopted public policies to protect sexual identity and diversity. Civil society maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Government and exerted social control over its actions.

34. Brazil had strengthened its democracy by stepping up the campaign against racism. A Government's mission was to satisfy the needs of all citizens and thus provide different protection to people with different needs. For that reason, the racial perspective formed part of all Brazilian social programmes. A national health policy had been developed specifically for the black population and the history of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian peoples had been included in the elementary school curriculum. Affirmative action measures had also been taken to facilitate access to higher education. Those various policies, which were associated with an increase in investments in the social sphere, had made it possible to reduce inequalities significantly and to bring the poverty rate down from 43 per cent to 30 per cent.

35. It was essential to strengthen cooperation at the international level. The Review Conference offered the opportunity to share the experience, best practices and technical assistance relevant to the fight against racism and racial discrimination. The creation of a racial equality index or system of indicators would be useful. It was also important for the United Nations to encourage debate on the forms of intolerance that were not clearly covered by the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, as there would be no true democracy until all forms of discrimination, segregation and intolerance had been definitively eliminated.

*Statement by the Minister of International Cooperation of Egypt*

36. **Ms. Aboulnaga** (Minister of International Cooperation of Egypt) said that the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance remained rife in the world, despite all efforts to combat it. The Review Conference offered an opportunity for all countries to consider the extent to which they had honoured, collectively and individually, the commitments undertaken in that regard, and to reaffirm their desire to continue the struggle.

37. Egypt had always given the campaign against racism the highest priority. It participated in international initiatives and also ensured that it took the necessary measures at the national level. It had played an active role in drafting international instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as well as in preparing the outcome document of the Review Conference.

38. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which represented a milestone in the international community's efforts to combat racism, offered a comprehensive and solid foundation for all who wished to fulfil their responsibilities in that regard. However, it must be noted that policies and practices frequently did not reflect the commitments undertaken. Although some progress had been achieved in some areas, racism persisted in various forms and was assuming other forms that current policies and legislation could not address. For example, it was undeniable that racial and religious discrimination, in particular towards Arabs and Muslims, had reached an unprecedented level in recent years. It was, therefore, incomprehensible that some continued to ignore that reality and deny the link with racism. It was also difficult to understand the reasons why some refused to re-examine their practices and legislation in the light of that development. Moreover, those manifestations of hatred did not come within the scope of the exercise of freedom of expression, as some claimed. It would certainly be wrong to reduce what was at stake to a simple debate between the supporters and opponents of freedom of expression. On the contrary, it was a serious matter that called for open and constructive dialogue between all stakeholders.

39. In adopting the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, States had raised the issue of the plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation and called for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination. However, no progress had been made in that regard. The situation in the occupied territories was a flagrant violation of international law. Egypt therefore called once again on States to implement the provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action that were relevant to the Middle East, as well as the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2007.

40. The review of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action must be frank, and as consensual as possible. It should be emphasized that any attempt at dialogue or negotiation would be futile if "red lines" were drawn, in particular with regard to issues already addressed in Durban in 2001. The first paragraph of the draft outcome document was particularly important as it reaffirmed all the provisions contained in the original text. However, the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance could only be strengthened by renewing those commitments.

*Statement by the Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare of Sri Lanka*

41. **Mr. Devananda** (Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare of Sri Lanka) recalled that four major world religions, namely, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, coexisted in Sri Lanka, as did three major communities: Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. Such diversity in such a small space could foster conflict, as had been the case for the previous three decades. The origins of the conflict were linked to racism but also, as elsewhere, to imperialism and colonialism. The demands of the Tamils — for equality and power-sharing in the areas where they formed the overwhelming majority, in other words in the north and east of the country — had been peaceful in the beginning, but the fact that they had been brutally repressed had encouraged the emergence of militant organizations that were prepared to take up arms. The agreement concluded with India in 1987 should have put an end to the hostilities and allowed a power-sharing system to be established, but its implementation had been blocked by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who wanted to create an independent Tamil State. Not content with waging a war against the State, they also fought any democratic Tamil forces that refused allegiance to them. They also held a considerable number of Tamil civilians. Racism did not always come from the majority but could also exist within a minority.

42. Currently, the Government had almost suppressed LTTE activities and was committed to implementing the law on the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, which granted substantial autonomy to the provinces. Moreover, it had taken steps to promote



bilingualism in the administration and the armed forces. Sri Lanka was a party to the main international human rights instruments, in particular the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

43. Sri Lanka called on the Member States of the United Nations to work together to achieve the objectives of the 2001 World Conference and implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Such collaboration was of fundamental importance because, as experience had shown, the real enemies were not other States but racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

*Statement by the Minister of Justice of Mozambique*

44. **Ms. Levi** (Minister of Justice of Mozambique) said that throughout the world, racism and racial discrimination continued to prevent people from enjoying their most fundamental right, the right to equality. In Durban, States had worked together to draft a programme of action to combat that phenomenon, although the programme had yet to be fully implemented, and events showed on a daily basis that a huge task remained to be accomplished. That was why the Review Conference was so important: the international community must reaffirm its will to combat racism. For its part, Mozambique was determined to pursue the struggle, since the persistence of racism fuelled many conflicts.

45. Mozambique was a signatory to a number of regional and international instruments aimed at promoting equal rights and non-discrimination. It had amended discriminatory provisions in its legislation and had strengthened institutional anti-discrimination mechanisms. Its Constitution guaranteed equality for all and prohibited any discrimination based on race, skin colour, gender or ethnic origin. Public institutions and civil society together ensured respect for those principles. Legislative measures had also been taken to eliminate stereotypes and discriminatory practices. Laws had been adopted to prevent any discrimination in service delivery, particularly in the tourism sector, as well as to protect the right to work and prevent discrimination against workers, for example on the grounds of sexual orientation, race or HIV infection. Being aware of the vicious circle, whereby poverty generated discrimination which, in turn, fostered poverty, the Government was working to reduce extreme poverty through economic development programmes targeting rural areas in particular.

46. The outcome of the Review Conference would be as crucial to the fight against discrimination and intolerance as it would be to all human rights advocacy activities. The Conference slogan, "United Against Racism: Dignity and Justice for All", underscored the fact that only by remaining united could the international community redress the suffering of the countless victims of racism and move towards a society free of prejudice in which dignity, justice and fraternity prevailed.

*Statement by the Minister of Justice of Senegal*

47. **Mr. Niang** (Minister of Justice of Senegal) recalled that in 2001, the international community had pledged to step up the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and had adopted concrete measures to that end that aimed to guarantee equality between all human beings, to ensure respect for the dignity of all and to eliminate prejudice and stereotypes. Almost eight years later, the results were far from meeting expectations.

48. Indeed, there had been a noticeable increase in racism and intolerance worldwide, the main victims of which were migrants, women and ethnic and religious minorities. Moreover, because of the economic and financial crisis, the situation could become worse, as was already attested by the many signs of a retreat into parochialism. Nevertheless, that alarming fact should not obscure the efforts that States were making to honour the commitments undertaken in Durban.

49. Senegal that day strongly reaffirmed the relevance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which had been adopted by consensus. It had endeavoured to implement their provisions, placing emphasis on education, advocacy and prevention. A number of legislative measures had been taken to combat discrimination and intolerance, in particular with regard to the formation of associations, including political parties; the Penal Code contained provisions on non-discrimination and prescribed severe penalties for violations of that principle. In order to contribute to achieving the common goal of building a world in which civilizations, cultures and religions coexisted in harmony, Senegal would host the third World Festival of Negro Arts in December 2009.

50. The victims of racism had high expectations of the Durban Review Conference and nurtured the hope that they would see their situation improve; therefore, it was the collective responsibility of participants not to let them down. That would require everyone to be involved; there was no place for exclusion or withdrawal in that struggle. The outcome document would need to send a message of tolerance and openness to mutually respectful dialogue and to contain measures capable of having a significant impact on the ground. In that regard, Senegal hoped that it would be possible to reconcile adherence to the spirit of the decisions taken in 2001 with the flexibility needed in order to cope with the challenges of the present. It considered that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had an essential role to play in that regard and that universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination would be beneficial.

51. Senegal was committed to promoting and protecting human rights and would spare no effort to ensure that peace, dignity and tolerance prevailed in a constantly changing world.

*Statement by the Minister of Justice and Human Rights of Tunisia*

52. **Mr. Tekari** (Minister of Justice and Human Rights of Tunisia) reaffirmed the importance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference in 2001. Tunisia had taken various steps to combat racism and racial discrimination in order to meet its commitments. Significant changes had been made to the education system, and to school curricula in particular, with a view to fostering a culture of fraternity and respect for others. In 2004, a law had been enacted prohibiting the consideration of any personal racial, genetic or religious data or any information on ideological or trade union views, in order to prevent the spread of racism and xenophobia. Moreover, two university chairs, one of which was a UNESCO Chair, had been created to establish an interracial, inter-religious dialogue with a view to promoting convergence of views and acceptance of others. In April 2006, a study group had been set up to analyse efforts to strengthen the culture and values of peace. Lastly, convinced that young people played a central role in further propagating the values of peace, moderation and friendship, Tunisia had declared 2010 the “International Year of Youth” and would organize an international conference, under United Nations auspices, bringing together young people from all over the world to draft a charter enshrining common universal values.

53. Globalization had made it possible to strengthen international solidarity and improve the global economy but had also had negative repercussions, including the widening of the North-South digital divide. While aspirations to peace and security remained, obstacles such as poverty must first be overcome and, in particular, any notion of superiority and any policy based on double standards must be discarded so that people did not feel themselves to be the victims of injustice and inequality. It was essential that those living under the yoke of colonialism, in particular the Palestinian people, should enjoy peace and justice.

54. Tunisia, which supported international efforts to combat racism and racial discrimination, thus intended to participate actively in the Review Conference in order to

defend the values of moderation, freedom, equality and justice. It hoped that the draft outcome document, adopted by consensus, could eventually be implemented for the benefit of civilizations and to ensure protection against all forms of racism. The problems of the past had been caused by racist behaviour that had not been suppressed in time.

*Statement by the Minister of Justice of Morocco*

55. **Mr. Radi** (Minister of Justice of Morocco) said that the World Conference against Racism held in Durban in 2001 had made it possible to lay the foundations of international cooperation in the common effort to combat racism in all its forms, and to counter its impact on the full enjoyment of human rights the world over. Racism in all its forms represented the most extreme violation of human rights and human dignity. That was the reason why the 2001 Conference had brought the world's attention to racism and mobilized global awareness to combat and eradicate it.

56. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action which had been adopted by consensus at that Conference, constituted a road map for action against racism by the international community. That document had made it possible to gauge the magnitude of the challenges confronting nations and to propose concrete and effective global measures to address those challenges.

57. Eight years after Durban, the Review Conference was a milestone in the universal fight against racism. Besides being the occasion on which to evaluate the implementation of the objectives set in 2001, it offered an opportunity to give new impetus to international mobilization against that new, modern-day form of hatred.

58. During the same period, the prospects for peace in the Middle East had receded in the face of war, violence and terrorism. Morocco noted with serious concern the repeated acts and manifestations of religious intolerance. In that regard, the opportune proposal by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the organization of regional seminars on racial and religious hatred in order to consider that issue in greater depth was to be welcomed and Morocco was willing to host a seminar for the African region on that subject.

59. Morocco had contributed actively to the preparatory process for the Review Conference, which it considered it to be an important step towards strengthening the international legal arsenal on human rights. It confirmed the interdependence and complementarity of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the common ground on which those instruments stood.

60. Since its independence, Morocco had opted for a market economy, political pluralism and regional decentralization as an organizational framework serving to give a voice to all of the diverse communities, regions and political, social and cultural strands of opinion. In that way, Morocco had made considerable progress in combating racism, racial discrimination and religious intolerance, including through the institutional and legislative reforms that it had introduced in order to harmonize its domestic legislation with the relevant international instruments.

61. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance required a universal, comprehensive, responsible and united approach and national actions that were capable of meeting the challenges that they posed. Countries thus had an obligation to ensure that the Geneva Review Conference was not just a meeting, but a meeting with history.

*Statement by the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)*

62. **Mr. Ihsanoglu** (Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference) emphasized that the active and constructive participation of the Organization of the Islamic

Conference (OIC) in the preparatory process for the Review Conference reflected the commitment of its 57 member States to its objectives. Although some divergent views had been expressed during the negotiations of the outcome document, OIC had spared no effort and had demonstrated flexibility with regard to crucial issues, such as the defamation of religions and freedom of expression. It was disappointing that some countries had chosen not to attend.

63. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had marked a significant milestone in the collective struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Unfortunately, the attacks of 11 September 2001 had swiftly reversed that trend and Muslims in general had had to face stigmatization as a result of the acts of a small minority among them. Defamation of Islam was currently one of the most conspicuous manifestations of contemporary racism and threatened the peaceful coexistence of nations. Moreover, the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia had an adverse impact on the image, honour, identity and self-esteem of Muslims the world over and undermined their fundamental rights. Nevertheless, OIC remained ready to engage in constructive dialogue in order to identify problems and find solutions.

64. It was important to acknowledge that national legislation alone could not stem the rising tide of discrimination against Muslims. In that regard, once the compatibility of national legislation with international instruments had been verified, the creation of a single, universal document on discrimination and the causes thereof that would serve as a blueprint for each member State could be useful. The establishment of an observatory on racism, as proposed by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, was another path to explore.

65. Naturally, OIC defended freedom of expression and considered that it would be counter-productive to contrast it with religious freedom. Equality, non-discrimination, freedom of expression and respect for others were founding principles of Islam; in that regard, it should be emphasized that the idea of establishing an OIC Human Rights Commission was steadily gaining ground. Such a body, composed of independent experts, would provide member States with a robust and coherent human rights protection system.

66. OIC had consistently made it clear that the Durban Review process should not be politically motivated, nor should it be an exercise in anti-Semitism. On the contrary, the process should be inclusive and give all stakeholders the freedom to address the real and serious challenges of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. The Review Conference was obviously not the place to resolve the Middle East conflict; however, military occupation gave rise to human rights violations and discriminatory practices.

67. OIC called for a consensual approach at the Durban Review Conference. Cultural diversity being to humanity what biodiversity was to nature, it called on member States to make the planet a warm and friendly place where it was possible for people to live together in peace and harmony.

*Statement by the President of the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination of Mexico*

68. **Ms. Bustamante** (President of the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination of Mexico) said that Mexico, convinced of the importance of combating all forms of discrimination, in order to build societies that were fairer, more democratic and more developed, had participated in the World Conference against Racism held in Durban in 2001. It had undertaken to adopt measures at the national, regional and international levels to eradicate those anomalous practices and had participated actively in the preparatory process for the Review Conference. In view of the balanced nature of the draft outcome document produced as a result of those efforts, it was most unfortunate that some countries had chosen not to participate in the Review Conference.

69. After completing the rigorous and honest analysis of the discriminatory practices and attitudes prevailing in society that it had begun in 2001, Mexico had amended its Constitution to prohibit all forms of discrimination and had adopted a federal law to prevent and eliminate discrimination. Indigenous peoples and communities were an essential part of Mexico's national culture and identity, and their right to self-determination and autonomy was now recognized. Moreover, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples had been established within the National Institute of Indigenous Languages.

70. Since 2004, Federal Government action against discrimination, coordinated by the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination, had focused on four main areas, namely: promotion of a culture of tolerance for diversity and respectful coexistence; development of public policies for the prevention and elimination of the structural causes of different forms of discrimination; establishment of a regulatory framework and review mechanisms that incorporated anti-discriminatory procedures; and complaints and claims mechanisms to deal with victims of discrimination. At the international level, Mexico had adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to eliminate discrimination, in particular with regard to women, children, persons with disabilities, persons of African descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, persons living with HIV/AIDS and persons of different sexual orientation.

71. Mexico attached special importance to the rights of undocumented migrants, particularly women and children, and in that regard wished to emphasize that security considerations should not prevail over respect for universal human rights. By renewing their commitment to the full exercise of all human rights, members of the international community would make a decisive and lasting contribution to eliminating discrimination throughout the world and to consolidating equality for all. By identifying common challenges and areas of mutual cooperation, they would be able to build fairer, more open and more egalitarian societies.

*The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.*