



United Nations - Information Service

Meeting Summary

www.unog.ch > News and media

Durban Review Conference
AFTERNOON

RC/09/8
22 April 2009

DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE HEARS TWENTY-FIVE INTERVENTIONS UNDER ITS GENERAL SEGMENT

The Durban Review Conference heard 25 interventions this afternoon under its general segment in which speakers underlined, among other things, that since 2001 progress had been achieved, but challenges still remained. Racism and racial discrimination were global scourges that still affected millions of people in all countries of the world. Racial prejudice, xenophobia, and intolerance persisted in many societies along with new and contemporary manifestations.

Some speakers again regretted the statement by the President of Iran at the opening of the Review Conference. Iran spoke in right of reply, refuting criticism against the President.

In the general segment, speakers said atrocities committed against minorities, whether migrant workers, women or children, were a clear demonstration of undermining the honour and dignity of human beings and disrespecting the equality of human rights. In order to examine the complex question of racism and all forms of discrimination properly, it was necessary to make efforts to avoid politicisation and to commonly agree on further activities in fighting these phenomena. Injustice anywhere was a threat to justice everywhere. Refugees and minorities were often faced with discouraging realities such as high poverty and unemployment rates and problematic access to medical services and social welfare. Without real collective action in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, the progress and work achieved thus far would be relegated to the status of double speak.

Speakers said the shared principles of the international community were clear: to combat racism and xenophobia; to pay attention to the humanitarian aspects of asylum and migration; to constantly improve measures against discrimination and in favour of the integration of persons belonging to minorities; to prevent and combat the trafficking of persons through comprehensive policies and international cooperation; and to protect the rights of children, women and the disabled. The final outcome document contained a series of extremely important elements in the fight against racism, with a good balance between the different interests and was acceptable by all delegations. All should continue their fight, in cooperation with the international community, to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Speaking in the general segment were representatives of Lebanon, Oman, Austria, Bangladesh, Japan, Jamaica, Serbia, Nepal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Djibouti, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Uruguay, Holy See, Algeria, Jordan, Lithuania, Greece, Thailand, Singapore, Costa Rica and Cambodia. A representative of United Nations Children's Fund also took the floor.

The Conference will continue its work at 10 a.m. on Thursday, April 23 when it will briefly resume its high-level segment and then continue with its general segment.

General Segment

NAJLA RIACHI ASSAKER (Lebanon) said Lebanon was described by Pope Jean-Paul II as a miracle of how people could live together. It was a country bearing a message, where cultures and religions met. Its soul was the meeting of Christianity and Islam, East and West, diversity and tolerance.

Lebanon was unwaveringly attached to the great human values that were democracy, human rights, public freedoms, reconciliation, dialogue, coexistence and tolerance. Despite all the crises it had suffered, it was searching for liberty and peace, and was, in some way, a metaphor for humanity as a whole, its suffering and success. Faced with wars that tore the region apart seemingly ceaselessly, liberty and peace could not prevail unless there was justice.

Israel should withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, and the Palestinian people should establish an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Since the creation of the United Nations, new challenges had emerged. The increase in regional conflicts, the emergence of international terrorism, the uncertainties of globalisation of economies, incitement to religious hatred, the world food crisis, and environmental issues were all worldwide evils, and the international community should show solidarity in attacking them, as they led to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Lebanon believed in the universal aims promulgated at the 2001 World Conference in Durban. Eight years had passed and progress in the application of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had not lived up to the challenges.

YAHYA S. AL-WAHAIBI (Oman) thanked the President of the Review Conference for his guidance and leadership. Oman was confident that through his guidance the Conference would be a success. The Government of Oman called on all parties to show a spirit of responsibility to offer the victims of racism and racial discrimination some reconciliation. They welcomed and were proud of the outcome document and hoped to support the international community's efforts in combating racism. Oman presented its first national report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2002. Oman believed in a spirit of tolerance, solidarity and brotherhood, which was rooted in its society in order to consolidate the fundamental rights of all without discrimination. The Government had adopted a number of measures to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, and would continue its commitment in this regard.

CHRISTIAN STROHAL (Austria) said that racism and discrimination were indeed challenges that affected all. They appeared in different ways and in all parts of the world; they threatened our societies and sometimes even peace and security of entire nations. The international community had been taking a clear stand against racism and discrimination. The United Nations had demonstrated great determination not only in many statements and declarations, but also in developing, nearly half a century ago, a specific international legal instrument, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Also at this Conference, representatives of many countries were expressing their resolve in the fight against racism, discrimination and hatred. However, the leader of one country abused this conference as a platform for the dissemination of views that were totally unacceptable. Such an attack on one country ran counter to the very objectives of this conference and must therefore be refuted. In order to combat the phenomena of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance effectively, it was important to address their root causes. While human diversity, be it cultural, religious or ethnic, contributed with richness to human society, these differences were also being abused to foster hatred and intolerance. The Holocaust had shown that this could lead to the destruction of whole communities. Austria felt a specific historical responsibility to apply the lessons of the past and was committed to fighting against Anti-Semitism and all other forms of intolerance.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remained a milestone in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Declaration reaffirmed that every human being had the right to a life of dignity and nobody should be subjected to insult or offence because of his or her race, colour, religion, nationality or origin. The Plan of Action provided for a comprehensive set of steps to eliminate acts of racism and xenophobia. After eight years, it was time to review the progress in implementation. There had been some progress in the fight against racism - this fact could not be denied. A number of countries had taken measures to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, but this had not been enough. Racial prejudice, xenophobia, and intolerance persisted in many societies along with new and contemporary manifestations.

Racism and racial discrimination were the anti-thesis of everything that humanity stood for. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance were insidious, corrosive, and, if left to fester, could be detrimental to societies. Actions were required at national, regional and international levels. At the national level, legislation should be adopted and implemented to stem racist ideologies and practices and prevent advocacy of hatred and intolerance. The sense of impunity for racist

crimes should be eliminated through effective and timely prosecution. The international community should rededicate itself to the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It should ignore divisive forces and demonstrate that it could create a world where the promise of "dignity and justice for all" was not an empty slogan but a reality.

SHIGEYUKI HIROKI ([Japan](#)) said that it was important to recall the original purpose of the Review Conference "United against Racism: Dignity and Justice for All". Based on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 2001, Japan hoped that there would be future-oriented and forward-looking discussions towards the elimination of racism and that they would come up with practical and effective measures to fight against racism in the world. It was deeply regrettable, however, that the statements by some of the earlier speakers, using this Conference as a platform to be divisive, included what was contrary to achieving the objectives of this Review Conference. It was Japan's strong and sincere desire that all participating delegations would be engaged with in the Conference in a constructive and cooperative manner, respecting its objectives and spirit.

The Government of Japan had been actively promoting the elimination of prejudice or discrimination against foreigners in the country, acceptance of foreign cultures and diversity, and respect for the human rights for foreigners. In addition, Human Rights Counselling Offices for Foreign Nationals with interpretation services had been established in major cities in Japan. Concerning the Ainu people, the Japanese Diet unanimously adopted a resolution in June 2008 recognizing that the Ainu people were an indigenous people residing mainly in Hokkaido. The Government had growing concerns over the violations of human rights, including racial discrimination through the Internet. The Government had growing concerns over the violations of human rights, including racial discrimination through the Internet.

PETER C. BLACK ([Jamaica](#)) said that Jamaica was deeply disappointed that the progress that had been anticipated following the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban had not materialized. In large measure, this failure could be attributed to the lack of will to fully implement the provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The basic responsibility lay squarely with States to ensure the full and effective implementation of all commitments. A renewed focus on implementation therefore was essential so that real progress could be made in combating the scourge of racism. This Durban Review Conference must yield tangible results.

Jamaica was dismayed that the Conference had become so intensely politicized that its objectives stood to be severely compromised. Jamaica urged all United Nations Member States to refrain from actions that would undermine the legitimacy of the process, and to steadfastly maintain their focus on addressing the central issues of racism and racial discrimination. The pernicious legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery and colonialism were issues contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action which were of special importance to Jamaica. It was imperative that appropriate and effective measures were taken to counter the enduring consequences of these tragedies.

SLOBODAN VUKCEVIC ([Serbia](#)) said all were gathered here to discuss the important issue of the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the context of the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as further steps to be taken at the global level to prevent and suppress these negative phenomena. Serbia, as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural State, was firmly committed to maintaining its cultural diversity while respecting and fostering specific characteristics of all ethnic and religious minorities. Ever since the democratic changes, Serbia had embarked upon an all-embracing process of legislative reform.

All here would agree that the fight against any form of racism and discrimination should not apply double standards - such acts, wherever they occurred, deserved strong condemnation by the international community, and the United Nations in the first place. In order to examine the complex question of racism and all forms of discrimination properly, it was necessary to make efforts to avoid politicisation and to commonly agree on further activities for fighting these phenomena. Injustice anywhere was a threat to justice everywhere.

DINESH BHATTARAI ([Nepal](#)) welcomed the comprehensive statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her tireless efforts and personal commitment to eliminate discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. The international community had a collective responsibility to combat discrimination and intolerance in all its forms and manifestations. People continued to be discriminated and victimized for their ethnic origins as being 'others'. Atrocities committed against

minorities, whether migrant workers, women or children, were a clear demonstration of undermining the honour and dignity of human beings and disrespecting the equality of human rights.

Historic changes had taken place in Nepal. The arduous struggle and immense sacrifices made by the people of Nepal led to profound socio-political transformation in the country. The transformation process was guided by the Comprehensive Peace Accord 2006, subsequent agreements and understandings between the Government and political parties, and the Interim Constitution 2007. On April 10, 2008 Nepal held elections to the Constituent Assembly in which people voted for an Assembly that stood as an illustration of proportionality and inclusiveness of the diverse population. On May 28, 2008, the Assembly formally abolished the institution of monarchy and declared Nepal a federal democratic republic. Nepal attached great importance to the premises of pluralism in eliminating discrimination and intolerance.

EMINA KEKO ISAKOVIC (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that Bosnia Herzegovina was home to three constituent peoples: Bosnians, Serbs and Croats, and to 17 national minorities. The Government had committed itself to ensure the highest level of protection of all human rights through the implementation of domestic and international regulations. Bosnia Herzegovina condemned any form of racial discrimination with the resolution to eliminate all such acts at the moment they occurred and condemned any form of propaganda inciting intolerance or racial discrimination. It recognized the human rights and special needs of vulnerable groups in the society, such as refugees, internally displaced persons, women, children and minorities, especially Roma. Refugees and minorities were often faced with discouraging realities such as a high poverty and unemployment rate, problematic access to medical services and social welfare.

Bosnia Herzegovina recognized sensitive links between the right to education and the struggle against racial discrimination, especially in the area of the prevention and eradication of all forms of intolerance and discrimination. An education of good quality was of vital importance for every child. Further, Bosnia Herzegovina was committed to combat trafficking in persons and eliminate all forms of trafficking in women and children. It had established a State Coordinator for the prevention of trafficking in persons and illegal immigration as well as a monitoring mechanism for the application of minimum standards for protection of victims of trafficking.

HANNU HIMANEN (Finland) said racism and racial discrimination were global scourges that still affected millions of people in all countries of the world. It was therefore of crucial importance to refocus the Conference on the need to continue joint efforts in preventing, combating and eradicating all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Durban Review Conference was an opportunity to take stock of what had been done since the 2001 World Conference. Much remained to be done - racism affected many groups in society, migrants, the Roma, indigenous peoples and sexual minorities, to name a few. Women and children within these underprivileged groups faced multiple discrimination.

There was a general need to improve the national implementation and enforcement of international standards, and there was a great demand for new initiatives and sharing of best practices as well as lessons learned in putting existing standards into practice. Only by adopting a comprehensive set of measures nationally could there be positive change towards a more equal society. There was a need for positive action through which the disadvantages brought about by racism and discrimination could be alleviated, and thus equality promoted among real people in their everyday lives.

MOHAMED SIAD DOUALEH (Djibouti) said that the harm caused by racism and all its forms had been demonstrated by history, slavery and the material domination posed by colonialists. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action affirmed the mobilization of the vigilant memory of all victims and allowed for a serious review of the past. The advances made in legislation, politics and programmes were recognized since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. However, challenges remained. There needed to be greater mobilization to address the new emerging trends in this context. It was unfortunate that the process that led to the adoption of the final outcome document was hindered during negotiations.

Djibouti congratulated the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her guidance during the negotiation process as well as all the delegations who exercised flexibility throughout the process. This Review Conference allowed everyone to exchange dialogue across different cultures. Without real collective action in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of

intolerance, the progress and work achieved thus far would be relegated to the status of double speak and cast into question its validity.

ELCHIN AMIRBAYOV ([Azerbaijan](#)) said that unfortunately, even nowadays, in the twenty-first century, the world still faced racist and xenophobic policies and practices. Today no region could be proud to be fully immune from these evils. Even after two devastating world wars, some politicians and ideologists promoted detrimental ideas of territorial claims of one state or another which often led to foreign military occupation, ethnic cleansing and other genocidal practices as well as emergence of huge flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. Azerbaijan was still experiencing the aftermath of these tragic phenomena. One had only to regret that hate speech and dangerous theories on incompatibility of various ethnic groups within one State were continuously used as tools to deepen the atmosphere of conflict, discrimination and discord.

The world was facing new dangerous tendencies today, such as attacks against religions, especially Islam that was being equated with terrorism and violence. The international community and the United Nations human rights machinery could remain indifferent to the negative stereotyping and stigmatization of religions, which had negative impacts on the rights of persons associated with them. Azerbaijan stressed that freedom of expression was a precondition for a genuine and vibrant democracy and played an important role in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It was widely accepted that all rights, including this one, could not be realized to the detriment of others. Freedom of expression was a universal value which was not limited to a specific region.

GERMAN MUNDARAIN HERNANDEZ ([Venezuela](#)) said the processes of conquest and colonisation as well as attempts to exploit the work of the world's weakest had been accompanied by theories imposed by the colonisers, imposing legal justifications for what was not justifiable, going against morality. In moments of economic crisis, it was the most vulnerable groups which suffered the gravest trespasses, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. There were outbreaks of racism and xenophobia in many countries. When poverty was worse, the situation was ever more evident, and both old and new manifestations of these scourges should be fought. There were more victims than ever as people grew poorer.

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance went against the fundamental principles of Jesus of Nazareth and the Liberator Simon Bolivar. The cornerstone of Venezuelan socialism was based on full equality between men and women, and the Constitution noted that it was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, thus making discrimination intolerable. Venezuela was carrying out a revolution for the poor and the excluded, and this was what it had told the world. God had a preference for the poor and excluded. The weakest were marginalised and could not participate, and Venezuela was fighting tirelessly for their inclusion, working to empower the poorest, the victims of crimes and genocide. The fight against racism had gone on for centuries, costing lives, tears and suffering.

ROMERO RODRIGUEZ ([Uruguay](#)) said that the Durban Review Conference was a crucial stage for the international community in its struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. The Review Conference should not be seen as a forum for exacerbating differences, but a forum for reviewing achievements and what remained to be done. The preparatory process over the past months was complex. All parties worked hard which resulted in a consensus document. Uruguay noted with great sadness that a group of States decided to withdraw from the Conference. The importance of these international forums for commitment and dialogue was not something Uruguay questioned.

Based on the recommendations of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Government of Uruguay had made progress. Uruguay declared the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance as a national interest. The Government took measures to fight poverty, which denied millions of individuals their rights, leaving them in the most vulnerable state. National measures taken also included the focus on including training on diversity and human rights into education curricula. Uruguay upheld that the freedom of expression was a vital and important right. The Government established the Advisory Committee of the President on Racial Equality, and various bodies to address the rights of Afro-descendants, and in particular women of African descent.

SILVANO M. TOMASI, of the Holy See, said that globalization brought people together, but spatial and temporal proximity did not of itself create the conditions for constructive interaction and peaceful communion. In fact, racism persisted: the stranger and those who were different too often were rejected to the point that barbarous acts were committed against them, including genocide and ethnic cleansing. Old forms of exploitation gave way to new ones: women and children were trafficked in a contemporary form of slavery, irregular immigrants were abused, persons perceived to be or who in fact were different became in disproportionate numbers the victims of social and political exclusion.

The Holy See was also alarmed by the still latent temptation of eugenics that could be fuelled by techniques of artificial procreation and the use of superfluous embryos. The possibility of choosing the colour of the eyes or other physical characteristics of a child could lead to the creation of a subcategory of human beings or the elimination of human beings that did not fulfill the characteristics predetermined by a given society. In the fight against racism, faith communities played a major part. The Catholic Church, for example, had encouraged its many scholastic institutions to establish new ones, to be present in dangerous situations where human dignity was trampled upon and the local community disrupted.

IDRISS JAZAIRY (Algeria) said the Durban Conference commitments had in great part not been kept. A week after the meeting, the events of 11 September 2001 prevented them from materializing, and terrorism and cyber-terrorism ensured this. However, changes continued - international society was becoming more democratic, and yet secular racism in society was growing. Traditional racism was given a new and more pernicious form, using new parameters such as culture and religion. Racism occurred insidiously in employment and housing and through the dehumanisation of the other, legitimising incitation for hatred. This social cancer had developed even further in these times of economic insecurity, fighting against terrorism and world recession.

The colonial powers had enshrined discrimination - in this sense, the fight against racism was inseparable from the fight against foreign occupation. Apartheid was brought down by the people of South Africa, but elements remained in other latitudes. There were few who had the courage to denounce and try to deal with this. Nations that said they respected democracy and human dignity continued to pillage territories under foreign occupation. The United Nations should take measures to halt these predatory practices which were one of the most abject forms of racism. In the aim of achieving consensus, Algeria had participated in the discussion on the final document.

MUSA BURAYZAT (Jordan) said that Jordan had never experienced the phenomenon of racism and racial discrimination in the country. Jordanian culture enshrined equality for all and rejected discrimination in all its forms. The Constitution of Jordan also enshrined this principle. Jordan attached great importance to combating racism and was a priority for the Government on both the national, regional and international levels. The effects of globalization, the divides between north and south and the violation of the sacred nature of religion all stoked racism. Jordan was and always had been committed to equality, respect and the protection of women and children and vulnerable communities. The Government amended its legislation on migrant workers and now migrants enjoyed the same rights as that of Jordanian citizens. Jordan also upheld the rights of refugees, welcoming refugees fleeing from regional conflicts. The Government had acceded to the International Convention on Slavery and the Slave Trade.

It was hoped that the Review Conference would be an opportunity to review progress made since 2001 and address challenges that remained. However, racism was experiencing new outbreaks; in particular where Islamic and Arab minorities fell victim. The events of September 2001 aggravated Islamophobia and awakened fears from Christians around the world. There were causes to the phenomenon of racism - poverty, marginalization and exclusion were the root causes. Jordan welcomed the initiatives taken after Durban in 2001 to put an end to racism and racial discrimination, and in particular expressed interest in the initiatives taken by the Dutch authorities who began to take legal actions against those who perpetrated crimes of xenophobia; and the Turkish-Spanish initiative, in particular, because many non-governmental organizations, academics had joined this alliance. Jordan in its national capacity set-up a centre for dialogue more than 30 years ago aimed to cultivate a culture of peace amongst all monotheistic religions.

EDUARDAS BORISOVAS (Lithuania) said that Lithuania rejected in the strongest possible terms the hate filled allegations expressed by the President of Iran. Lithuania, which had lost nearly 300,000 of its people during the Holocaust, could not but find those remarks unacceptable, provocative and insulting both to Israel and the Jewish nation. Lithuania fully shared the assessment expressed by

the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights that the speech was clearly beyond the scope of the Review Conference. It could not see how this speech could contribute to fighting racism and promoting tolerance that was the aim of this Conference and Lithuania deplored such attempts to undermine efforts of the international community to address issues of racism.

Lithuania was fully committed to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance both on national and international levels. Lithuania welcomed international actions addressing these scourges and was fully convinced that common steps in this direction would help alleviate situations of people who suffered because of such violations of their rights. Lithuania underlined that international norms and standards provided a sound basis for their common actions. Their full implementation was one of the most important elements of preventing, combating and eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

FRANCISCOS VERRIOS (Greece) said this was an historical moment of remembrance and reminder, and Greece was delighted to participate in the common cause that was bringing the international community together: the struggle against racism, against hatred, against discrimination, against injustice - and this was part of the larger struggle for equality, human rights and human dignity. Many difficult moments which placed the success of the Conference in question were overcome, only to prove that the Conference was a unique opportunity for the international community to think and act for all people around the world, who had been struggling for the defeat of all kinds of discrimination. Racism in all its forms was abhorrent, and there should be strong follow-up of this Conference and a commitment by world leaders to overcoming racism.

The world was still suffering from deep divisions and alienation. The scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance had not been eradicated. There were attitudes today which sometimes took the form of serious threats to the quality of today's world and of its future. Respect for human rights, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law were all intertwined with peace, justice, security, stability, the eradication of poverty and cohesive socio-economic development. The shared principles of the international community were clear: to combat racism and xenophobia; to pay attention to the humanitarian aspects of asylum and migration; to constantly improve measures against discrimination and in favour of the integration of persons belonging to minorities; to prevent and combat the trafficking of persons through comprehensive policies and international cooperation; and to protect the rights of children, women, and the disabled.

SIHASAK PHUANGKETKEOW (Thailand) said that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance were matters that transcended national borders and the interests of any particular country or region. Therefore, it was vital for there to be a united and common endeavour to eradicate these practices and ensure a successful outcome of this Conference, both taking stock of what had been achieved and redoubling efforts to address remaining challenges. The issues that had taken up much of the discussions leading up to the Conference were based on striking a balance between incitement to hatred and freedom of expression. Thailand believed that the concerns expressed by both sides were legitimate. The spread of extremist ideologies in the name of religion as well as the occurrence of religious intolerance in many parts of the world had led to further discrimination and violence.

It was important to be both sensitive and even-handed when it came to balancing between freedom of expression and incitement to hatred; for both concepts were equally important and very often they were separated by only a fine line. While there should be no justification for placing limits on freedom of expression, such freedom must be applied with sensitivity, especially since it could be used as a pretext for incitement to hatred. Thailand was pleased that consensus had been reached with regard to the outcome document of the Review Conference. This reaffirmed that despite differences, all were united in their efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

TAN YORK CHOR (Singapore) said that the Durban World Conference in 2001 had not ushered in the end of the history of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In many places, people were still uncomfortable with the idea of race and often wanted to pretend that race did not exist. People might be taught that different races were equal and should get along, but they saw different races living separately and perhaps not getting along. While there could be a culture of political correctness and a list of things to say, these did not equip people with how to think about race or how to see their role in our modern-day global society in which race mattered. Indeed, it was striking that some of us had so little understanding about others, even about those living amongst us

or just across our borders, who were of a different race, culture or creed. Ignorance bred suspicions and phobias.

The tendency of modern mass media to generalise, caricaturize and sensationalize in order to sell news did not help. Stereotyping contributed to baseless fears and misrepresenting of cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Beyond fostering tolerance, Singaporeans had been encouraged to see the immense inherent value of diversity and to celebrate our diversity in our daily life, turning what might seem to be a handicap into a real asset. In our own small way, at the international level such as at the United Nations, Singapore hoped to also contribute to greater understanding of the vital need for tolerance and dialogue towards a better future for the peoples of the world.

LAURA THOMPSON (Costa Rica) said the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be waged from a universal approach. No region or country was spared from manifestations of intolerance, which affected all and affronted their dignity. The Durban Conference had been the first to study the effects of racism. Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was a duty, as it offered tools to confront these challenges. All of those present were here because they did not tolerate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The objective was to achieve a world of peace and security, but it was this common objective which had often led to disagreement. There were different ways to achieve this, such as finding common ideals between States and peoples through multilateralism and diplomacy.

Costa Rica praised the work carried out by the Preparatory Committee of the Conference, and the positive cooperation therein to come to a final document which contained a series of extremely important elements in the fight against racism, with a good balance between the different interests and was acceptable by all delegations. All should continue their fight, in cooperation with the international community, to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. States and Governments should continue to work to improve life in their countries. There were many challenges which remained in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and all should work to eradicate these.

SUN SUON (Cambodia) said that racism remained a global reality. Its negative effects of continued exclusion were met to this day in many parts of the world. Their existence and new emergence inflicted sufferings on countries and societies with political, economic and social consequences such as conflict, injustice and under-development. To further address those challenges, it was imperative for all nations to reinvigorate their efforts to ensure that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance had no place in societies. The convening of this Conference was therefore an opportune time for the international community to renew its commitments to the equality, dignity and rights of all human beings in pursuance to the agenda of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, along the line with the vision of realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant global documents.

Cambodia was a country that adopted the policy of tolerance in its society. The country overcame the social challenges in the past, and along the way gained experience from its legacy, to rebuild a reconciled society. Since the full achievement of peace and stability over the last decade, the Government was now making efforts toward the continued process of developments in all spheres including in that of human rights. At the national level, Cambodia prohibited any discrimination on grounds of race, colour, religion, or sex. The Constitution provided guarantees for equality before the law and equality of opportunity for all citizens including the affirmative action that applied for minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

NILS ARNE KASTBERG, of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said that the three musketeers of hatred: racism, discrimination and xenophobia, knew exactly where to hit to achieve long-term results: they targeted children from birth. Then they made sure to be persistent and delivered youth who because of their colour, ethnicity or because they were a girl, since birth had been twice as poor as all others; five times more likely to suffer from chronic under-nutrition; would go five to nine years less to school; were many times more exposed to violence and sexual abuse; and would live in horrid housing condition. This way, the three musketeers; the hateful racism, the spiteful discrimination and the paranoid xenophobia made sure their achievement was a life sentence and that it be transmitted to the next generation.

Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, together with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, provided all with the

mandate to take practical action in support of the 150 million Afro descendents and 50 million indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean. Durban brought light to the dark exclusion. Durban told us to count the excluded. Durban told us to reach them, to invest in them. Durban told us to change the mindsets. If Durban was to succeed, let us reach each and every child in time, before the three musketeers got to them.

Right of Reply

ALIREZA MOAIYERI (Iran), speaking in a right of reply, said with regards to the statements made by Norway, Argentina, Sweden, the United Kingdom, France and Australia, Iran strongly rejected the unwarranted and unsubstantiated references made in those statements and qualified them as without merit, unacceptable and out of order. The historic facts on the ground denied these allegations. The principles of human rights should guide all to condemn the massacring of innocent people, in particular women and children in a systematic manner. It was regrettable that the right to freedom of expression was wrongly and narrowly defined by some in the name of masking harsh realities that occurred against Muslims in some parts of the world. Iran protested strongly against the deplorable unwarranted statements by certain ranking United Nations officials, which contradicted well-established UN regulations following the statement by the President of Iran. United Nations civil servants should at all times abide by principles of impartiality and refrain from making judgemental remarks on positions of Member States, let alone a Head of State. There had been no incitement in the statement by the President of Iran, as irresponsibly alleged in those statements. Iran therefore rejected these statements and considered them totally unacceptable and out of context.
