



HIGHLIGHTS OF DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

24 April 2009

Ramu Damodaran, Spokesman for the Durban Review Conference, informed journalists that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, would be joining the press briefing. (See *separate transcript*)

Mr. Damodaran reported that 5,011 individuals registered to attend the Conference, which included States, NGOs and media personnel. This figure did not include the individuals attending the Conference who were already accredited to the UN Office at Geneva and had a grounds pass.

The Spokesman then provided information on legislative and other actions taken place in the United Nations following the 2001 Durban Conference. Among these actions was the adoption, at the end of 2005, of the General Assembly resolution designating the 27th of January every year as Holocaust Remembrance Day, which also established a programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations. As part of this initiative, the United Nations Department of Public Information has worked through United Nations Information Centres and NGOs, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Memorial de la Shoah in Paris and Yad Vashem in Israel, to have seminars for national information officers on Holocaust education and best practices. This resolution was followed by a subsequent one the following year which condemned, without any reservation, any denial of the Holocaust. The United Nations had also launched a series of seminars in 2004 entitled "unlearning intolerance"; the first seminar in June 2004 specifically addressed anti-Semitism and was inaugurated by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and the second seminar in December 2004 was on Islamophobia.

Another set of General Assembly resolutions, three in total, between 2006 and 2007, related to the Slave trade and the installation of a permanent memorial at United Nations HQ to honour the memory of the victims of the slave trade, the latter an initiative led by the Community of Caribbean Nations, the Spokesman added. In March 2007, UNGIFT – United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking – was launched. This led to a number of collaborations within the United Nations system such as that between the ILO, UNGIFT and the Global Compact to address the possible connections between business and human trafficking as it affected the policies of investors and stakeholders and how best to ensure that businesses did not inadvertently allow themselves to be used either by traffickers or use the trafficked. The Inter Parliamentary Union has also issued a handbook for parliamentarians on human trafficking.

Furthermore, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Migrant Workers and All Members of Their Families entered into force in July 2003 and a global forum on migration and development was also initiated in 2007, the last meeting on which was held in Manila last year where Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon took part. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples entered into force in September 2007, which led to another set of partnerships within the United Nations system and with civil society. Most recently the Government of Finland and the ILO worked on a project in the Lake Sebu region in the Philippines where members of an indigenous tribe who were deprived of all their land had been working to be able to reclaim that land and making that land productive.

It was also noted that negotiations on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in December 2006, began immediately after the 2001 Durban Conference.



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The Durban Declaration also specifically referred to the responsibility of the international community to help rebuild institutions of justice and the legal system in countries where these had either been frayed or had fallen into disrepair. Mention was also made of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission whose aim addressed those of the DDPA in the sense of establishing a better legal system and courts in countries which, inter alia, face challenges of racial discrimination; of note was the establishment of 36 courts in Burundi, under the auspices of the Commission.

As recommended in the DDPA, a series of investment policies had also been undertaken over the last few years for communities which had faced discrimination. The World Bank, in particular, had initiated a programme in Hungary with the Roma minority to be able to ensure not only access to investment for their own business enterprises, but also that this was backed by a sound educational system for Roma children who could then go on to become possible entrepreneurs. In terms of the Durban Declaration's recognition of HIV/AIDS, a global advisory group had been set up by UNAIDS on the question of human rights and HIV/AIDS.

Coming to the 2009 Outcome Document, the Spokesman noted it had made some very specific suggestions which were both new and practical. In the area of ending possible discrimination in the area of employment, the outcome document makes specific mention of the wisdom and necessity to explore the option of anonymous job applications. The outcome document also extended the idea of discrimination on grounds of illness beyond HIV/AIDS to other diseases including malaria and tuberculosis. There is also reference in the outcome document to the need for psychological counseling for women and children who were victims of racism and racial discrimination.

The outcome document, the Spokesman said, did not come out purely in the isolation of political discussion. It had been infused with a firsthand experience and advice of civil society representatives and of workers in the field who felt these elements must be specifically mentioned if the outcome document was to have any validity or serve as a road map for member States, civil society and for the international organizational system centered around the United Nations, individually and in partnership with each other.

Responding to a question, Mr. Damodaran clarified that the report of the Conference was scheduled to be adopted this afternoon, and that discussion on the actual outcome document, which was adopted on Tuesday, would not be reopened. The adoption would be done on an *ad referendum* basis thus allowing States up to two weeks to make editorial changes to the report and express any reservations to specific paragraphs or portions thereof.

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