

22 September 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the HLM to Commemorate the Tenth Anniversary
of the Adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet here today to reaffirm that we, the people and the nations of the world, make up one family, rich in diversity. It is our diversity that enriches humanity and steers progress. And it is through the celebration of this diversity, as well as through the promotion of tolerance and dispelling fears of the “other”, that we will build a more peaceful world. A world based on the fundamental principles of equality, trust and mutual respect.

In opening this meeting I would like to thank the co-facilitators, Her Excellency Mrs. Isabelle Picco, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the United Nations, and His Excellency Mr. Tommo Monthe, Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations. The co-facilitators very ably led the preparations for this high-level meeting, and I am grateful for their excellent efforts.

Today’s high-level meeting is an opportunity for world leaders to speak with one voice on one of the most critical global challenges of the 21st Century: the continuing scourge of racism and xenophobia worldwide. It is also an opportunity to recommit to the full and effective implementation of the actions outlined in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The DDPA was adopted by consensus in 2001.

Together with the Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference, the DDPA is the most comprehensive framework for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It highlights issues faced by victims of racial discrimination including people of African and Asian descent, migrants, refugees, and specific vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples and other minorities. It also emphasizes that we must remember the crimes or wrongs of the past, wherever and whenever they occurred. We must unequivocally condemn these racist tragedies, and tell the truth about history. These are essential elements for international reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity.

Unfortunately, despite progress made since the DDPA was adopted in 2001, instances of xenophobia, racism and intolerance have increased in severity and frequency. Racist attitudes and hate speech can be found in many countries and the internet provides a new vehicle for their proliferation.

While countries have come a long way in removing obstacles to the realization of the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination, much more remains to be done.

I would encourage all countries, individually and collectively, to intensify efforts aimed at reducing instances of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It is the responsibility of States to take the necessary legislative measures to prevent the occurrence of discriminatory practices and to grant justice to the victims. Governments, in collaboration with other stakeholders, including civil society and business, should intensify awareness-raising initiatives and enhance education in order to combat ignorance and effectively address the root causes of prejudice and negative stereotypes.

This high-level meeting is an opportunity to reaffirm our collective responsibility to combating racism and promoting equality and non-discrimination. It is also an opportunity to come together in unity to address the critical challenges before us.

I wish you a successful meeting. Thank you.