



**Permanent Mission  
of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
Geneva**

**Sixth Session  
of the Human Rights Council**

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**Item 9  
Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia  
and related intolerance, and the follow-up  
to the DDPA**

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**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Sameh Shoukry  
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
on behalf of the African Group**

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**Geneva, 21 September, 2007**

*Please check against delivery*

**Thank you Mr. President.**

**I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the African Group.**

**I would like first to thank Ambassador Najat Al-Hajjaji of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, for her briefing on the work of the Organizational Session of the Preparatory committee for the Durban review Conference, and Ambassador Juan Martabit, the Permanent representative of Chile, for his report on the second part of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration of Program of Action.**

**Mr. President,**

**Since this marks the first session where we undertake substantive consideration of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in this Council after the adoption of the Institution Building Text, we cannot but congratulate ourselves on the consensus decision taken to place this issue as a standing item on the Council's agenda.**

**The African Group appreciates this opportunity to take a step back and take a look, from a different vantage point and through a wider lens, at how things have evolved in the UN system regarding the fight against racism, especially since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in 2001, and the establishment of this very Council.**

**Mr. President,**

**Whether in the past through colonialism, plundering of wealth and enslavement, the recent past before the fall of Apartheid rule in South Africa, or in present times witnessing the continuing dire situation of people of African descent in the Diaspora, and the rising suffering of African migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the African continent has been at the heart of the scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and at the same time, at the forefront of global efforts to eliminate racism and its various forms and manifestations. The African conscience empathizes with the suffering that peoples were and are still subjected to throughout the world, and fully supports their struggle and for freedom from racism and racial discrimination.**

**Combating racism in its various forms and manifestations is, and should always be, at the core of human rights issues, as they affect the lives of peoples, groups, and individuals, constituting, millions, if not billions, of people every day. Certainly, the Council can only prove its relevance by helping lift and ease the suffering of the widest number of people around the**

world, through addressing the many scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, on a regular and a permanent basis, and redressing the situation of the victims.

The Council has its disposal the necessary means and tools to make an effective contribution to the global struggle against racism. What we are in dire need of now, not tomorrow, is political will on the part of everyone involved, to make this goal a reality.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has played a central role in the global struggle against racism and racial discrimination since its establishment. Among its landmark achievements, was applying the necessary pressure on a racist regime in South Africa, which had persisted for far too long, until its downfall came about. The Commission on Human Rights, and its Sub-Commission, who seem to have fallen out of favor with some rather quickly, played an instrumental role in this regard, constantly condemning and refuting doctrines and political ideologies based on racial superiority. In doing this, one of the Commission's main assets, was perseverance, never yielding to pressures and opposition coming from within it, or giving up merely because those in power were too powerful, or because they enjoyed the support of the more powerful. Remembering this is most relevant today, as the Council considers the longstanding unresolved conflicts under its permanent watch. We hope that the Council can live up to the Commission's legacy in this regard.

The United Nations has also given its members, among many others, two cornerstone instruments in fighting racism and racial discrimination, namely the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The provisions of both of these documents were meant to be implemented in good faith, and in full. But looking at the situation on the ground today, we wouldn't know it.

The DDPA had foreseen this eventuality and decided to establish follow-up mechanisms to ensure its effective implementation, all of which have made significant contributions to help advance the struggle against racism. We eagerly await their input in the Durban Review Process.

The Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration of Program of Action, under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Juan Martabit, has given us valuable recommendations to better implement the thematic provisions of the DDPA, and has also advanced the discussion on the issue of complementary standards, the elaboration of which is to begin soon, notwithstanding the fact the Group of Five Experts on Complementary Standards did not fulfill the mandate

entrusted to it. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has done the same, targeting areas of relevance and specificity not discussed before in human rights fora. The Five Independent Eminent Experts on the Follow-up to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, little as they met, provided us with two extremely valuable recommendations, no less than establishing the Racial Equality Index, and the call for convening the Durban Review Conference, the Preparatory Committee of which met at the end of last month. In addition to the Durban mechanisms, the importance of the work undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism cannot be overemphasized.

But the question we must ask is where did the wealth of recommendations emanating from those mechanisms all go ? If some have been partially implemented, weren't the rest also meant for implementation ? And if lack of implementation is due to considerations extraneous to human rights, does this really speak to the "ineffectiveness" of the mechanisms, or to the lack of will on the part of those who are not implementing.

Mr. President,

We ask these questions because there is a worrying trend to try to make UN Member States believe that the mechanisms we just referred to have not been "effective". This is difficult to understand because even a minimal level of engagement with these mechanisms could have made a substantial difference in our efforts to combat racism. Just to give a little example, the highly rich and technical debate at the last session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, with the participation of the Chairperson of the WG on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter terrorism, produced a recommendation calling for criminalizing racial profiling, envisaging sanctions for those who violate the law, and providing redress for the victims. If this recommendation alone, one of roughly 20 issued at that session, were implemented, or even steps were taken in this direction, it would make the world we live in today a better one.

But against this backdrop of lack of implementation and interest, and hesitance to look closely at what happened since the Durban Conference in 2001, and the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks that followed some hours later, there does remain hope. The period that followed September 11<sup>th</sup> saw the very core human rights norms and principles being challenged, compromised, and re-interpreted. A new and serious attempt at restoring what has been lost, helping maintain harmony, peace and stability, in nations and in the whole world alike, is surely worthwhile. Being silent today on manifestations of incitement to racial and religious hatred, whether in the form of sketches recently published in a Swedish newspaper, or hate propaganda on neo-Nazi websites, or the infamous racist poster we can all

repeatedly observe just a few minutes from the very building we're in, is simply inadmissible.

The Durban mechanisms will be meeting again soon, and we have been given a new lifeline through the Durban Review process. The African Group genuinely hopes that the consensus reached at the Organizational Session of the Durban Prep-Com, under the guidance of Ambassador Al-Hajjaji and the valuable contribution of the Ambassadors who assumed facilitating roles at the session, can be preserved. For that to happen, politics must be set aside, the agreements reached must be respected and not re-interpreted, and efforts to remove any ambiguities that may have arisen from the decisions taken at the Organizational Session of the Durban Prep-Com should aim at the strengthening the review process not weaken it. Simply put, human rights should prevail as the only consideration on the table.

I thank you.

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