

POLISH DELEGATION  
INTERVENTION ON RACISM

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen

May I begin my short intervention by congratulating the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the effective implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, my dear friend Ambassador Juan Martabit from Chile, on his tireless efforts to spearhead the Working Group towards an effective approach to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Even more, I would like to congratulate him on the important results achieved in this regard.

Austria has already spoken on behalf of the European Union and our delegation fully associates itself with this statement. Now, let me, Mr. President, add some specific comments to our debate.

The Working Group has become the central forum where those concerned meet and elaborate on international policies and measures to effectively address the just mentioned evils. Taking into account the Group's difficult birth and the complexity of the problems it has to deal with progress achieved is remarkable.

However, as we all know there is a long way from diagnosis, prescription, cure and actual healing in case of chronic and serious diseases. Racism and xenophobia are such chronic and serious diseases affecting all our societies. Nobody is free of a serious risk, at least, that sometimes even sporadic incidents can mutate into a serious illness.

The High Commissioner, Mme Louise Arbour said last week "Racial discrimination is also ever present, and in some regions may even be growing, fuelled by fear of terrorism, or anxiety over competition for employment." Indeed, we must be on the alert.

It is, however, not enough to be vigilant. Effective steps must be taken in all phases: prevention, reaction to manifestation of racism and xenophobia, and finally assisting victims and combating impunity.

The Working Group has been undertaking a systematic study of various aspects of racism and xenophobia. The conclusions of the Chair from the January meeting of the Working Group, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the latter concerning Internet and complementary standards are convincing and thoughtful. They require a systematic follow up.

To that end, my delegation wishes to stress the need for integrating related challenges in all the relevant programmes, not only those specialized in the area of human rights but also those addressing issues of peace and development. The human rights programme, the Working Group and the Office of the High Commissioner should continue to lead this effort.

Particular attention should be placed in this regard on education. As it was stressed by the independent eminent experts on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at their second meeting last year, education does not only constitute an essential tool to promote mutual respect and tolerance between individuals and communities, but also offers an important opportunity for victims of discrimination to overcome their disempowerment.

In this context, the Council may also wish to consider the need for further strengthening of the existing mechanisms in the area of racism and xenophobia through their better coordination and streamlining.

Mr. President,

Albert Einstein said that to combat deeply rooted racial bias we must have the courage to set an example by words and deed. This is related to all of us: at home, in our communities, and in this conference room.