**U.S. Opening Statement**

**DDPA Working Group**

**April 7, 2014**

         Thank you, Mr. Chair. We welcome your reelection, and thank you and others for your work in preparation for this important meeting.

         As you know, the United States normally does not participate in this working group because of our significant and well-known concerns about the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.

         That said, we are always ready to find common ground with others in the effort to combat racism, bigotry, and racial discrimination.  As Brazil’s delegation emphasized, our nation’s society is also multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural. The situation of people of African descent is a very significant element of our national history, of the social fabric of our society, and of our concern about human rights worldwide.

         Accordingly, in New York last December we supported UN General Assembly resolution 68/237, which proclaims the International Decade for People of African Descent beginning January 1, 2015.  That resolution also asked this Working Group to develop a draft Program, to serve as the basis for the General Assembly President’s work in developing a program for the implementation of the Decade.

         As you told us as the Chair, the time for that project is short; the Decade will begin less than eight months from now, and General Assembly gave itself a deadline of June 30, 2014 to finalize and adopt the program.

         In our work on the Program, as my European Union colleague said, we should emphasize the significant common ground that we share in our struggle against racism and racial discrimination, rather than our areas of differences.  This means focusing on taking real, practical steps in all of our countries, in law and in policy, to confront racism and racial discrimination.  We are skeptical, however, of proposals to create new instruments rather than focusing on implementation of existing ones such as the CERD, and of proposals to create costly new mechanisms that would have minimal impact on the lives of people of African descent.

        Thank you. We look forward to working constructively with you.