

DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE  
Organizational session of Preparatory Committee

Objectives of the Durban Review Conference, August 27, 2007

Joint NGO Statement by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN) and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Association of World Citizens, Arab Lawyers Union, Interfaith International,

Presented by Jan Lönn (ISMUN)

First of all we wish to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate H.E. Najat Al-Hajjaji on her election as chairperson of the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference. As Non-Governmental Organizations with a long standing involvement in the UN work against racism we wish to assure you and all the members of the Bureau of our full cooperation in making the Durban Review Conference a success.

We wish however to register our concern over the failure to assure the participation of representatives of the many non-governmental organizations that were specially accredited to the 2001 Durban conference at this Preparatory Committee. Their contributions no doubt would have been of great value in the deliberations on the objectives of the Durban Review Conference and we assume that everything will be made to facilitate their involvement in the future..

The World Conference Against Racism adopted an important Declaration and Program of Action which contain profound analyses of the causes and manifestations of racism and commitments by UN Member States for concrete measures to curb the scourge of racism in their societies and at the global scale. Unfortunately the Durban final document has become the least know among final documents from UN World Conferences, something we hope that the United Nations secretariat and Governments concerned will help correct in the preparations leading up to the Review Conference.

It is with great alarm that today we are witnessing an upsurge of racism in many countries as a result of neglect to address root causes and institutionalized racism. Racism is taking an increasingly violent form in many countries, in particular attacks on people of African descent. It particularly regrettable that this negative development is taking place after that the World Conference Against Racism had given high priority to addressing racist practices that were rooted in historical wrongs and injustices.

Furthermore the world has witnessed a serious aggravation of racist practices in the wake of the 9/11 events targeting immigrants and Moslems in particular by ignoring Human Rights standards in what is described as a war against terrorism.

It is obvious that in reviewing the implementation of the Durban agreements there must also be a serious deliberation guided by the Durban commitments on issues that have arisen after Durban and which need the urgent attention of the international community. We thus support an objective for the Durban Review Conference which include further actions, initiatives and practical solutions for combating all the contemporary scourges of racism.

We believe that an overarching objective of the Durban Review Conference must be to restore the priority of the combat against racism in the work of the United Nations. Indeed, in observing the 61 years of UN action against racism we should take the success of the joint efforts against Apartheid as an inspiration for a renewed and strengthened joint effort by Governments and Public Opinion working together to combat racism.