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Presentation of the work done by the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review
Conference at its First session

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REVIEW CONFERENCE
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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking all of those who participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference which took place from the 27th - 31st August here in Geneva. We discussed many important issues that have established a good basis for the preparation of the Durban Review Conference. After lengthy and constructive dialogue between all participants, we were able to reach consensus on a number of significant issues. Outstanding progress was made and the success of the session has enabled us to provide a good road map to achieving our objectives in the run up to what we are all confident will be a successful Durban Review Conference in 2009.

Mr. President,

Today, I have the honour of presenting the work done by the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference, to the Human Rights Council at its 6th session.

I am pleased to report that all decisions were successfully adopted by consensus during the week-long session. It was through both formal and informal consultations, and with the help and guidance of facilitators (the ambassador of Argentina, the ambassador of Armenia, the ambassador of Brazil and the ambassador of the Russian Federation to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude), that the Preparatory Committee was able to reach agreement.

I would like now to mention just some of the decisions adopted. Please note that this is only meant to be a summary of the key points. However, I would encourage you all to take the time to read the detail of each of the decisions found in the report of the

Preparatory Committee in Annex 1:

- decision 2 on participation of, and consultation with, observers at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee sets out the criteria and practices for participation by observers including non-governmental organizations at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee;
- decision 5 on the Secretary-General of the Durban Review Conference - here the Preparatory Committee decided to request the Secretary-General to designate the High Commissioner for Human Rights as Secretary-General of the Durban Review Conference, I am convinced that this appointment is an asset for the success of the Durban Review Conference;
- decision 8 that recommends to the Human Right Council to adopt a decision inviting the Preparatory Committee to submit its reports to the General Assembly;
- decision 9 where we have adopted provisional rules of procedure for the Durban Review Conference;
- decision 10 on reports, studies and other documentation for the Preparatory Committee and the Durban Review Conference where the Preparatory Committee requested all relevant participants to assist the Preparatory Committee by undertaking review and submitting recommendations, as contributions to the outcome of the Review Conference and also requested for a questionnaire to be prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, under the supervision of the bureau, and sent to all stakeholders immediately following the organizational session;
- decision 11 related to preparatory meetings and activities at the international, regional and national levels and decided that reports of such activities be submitted to the Preparatory Committee;
- decision 12 on sources of funding and financial and technical assistance, the Preparatory Committee decided to request the United Nations Secretary-General to provide the necessary resources for the preparations for the Durban Review Conference and to consider providing, as appropriate, the necessary financial and technical assistance for the convening of the regional preparatory meetings, according to the established practices, it also requested the High Commissioner

for Human Rights to revitalize the voluntary fund for the Durban Review Conference;

- decision 13 relates to the objectives of the Durban Review Conference and after much work and deliberation the Preparatory Committee were successfully able to agree on the following objectives:
 - to review progress and assess implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action by all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels, including assessing contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, through an inclusive, transparent and collaborative process and identify concrete measures and initiatives for combating and eliminating all manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to foster the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;
 - to assess the effectiveness of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms and other relevant United Nations mechanisms dealing with the issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to enhance them;
 - to promote the universal ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and proper consideration of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and
 - to identify and share good practices achieved in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances.

I also would like to refer you to decision 15 concerning the organization of work for the substantive sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the formulation of a concrete plan for the preparatory process.

Please allow me once again to express my most sincere appreciation and thanks for the dedication and hard work of those who participated at the Preparatory Committee,

including representatives of member states, observers, members of the bureau and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her support and commitment in the fight against racism. Thanks also to the President of the Council for his support and for allowing me the opportunity to present this report to the Human Rights Council at its session today.

Distinguished Delegates,

The fight against racism and racial discrimination is essential to the enjoyment of human rights and to the consolidation of the rule of law, sustainable development, democracy and peace.

Six years have passed since Durban, since then many efforts have been made in the eradication of the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; however, despite continuing efforts, we continue to observe with concern that, unfortunately, racism and discrimination continue to be a root cause of numerous human rights violations.

From a standpoint of renewed interest, a review conference will give new impetus to countering racism. It will unite the global community in a determined struggle against this social evil. The 2009 Review Conference represents an opportunity from which all relevant stakeholders can reflect on the reasons why, in spite of all the efforts, we have not overcome all the manifestations of racism and to effectively implement the anti-discrimination agenda.

The work ahead of us is enormous, but I am delighted to see the interest you have displayed in ensuring the achievement of the goal of the first session of the Preparatory Committee. I will count on the participation of each and every one of you to make the Preparatory process of the Durban Review Conference a success.

We have a long way ahead of us and at times we will be faced with difficult and contentious issues. In these moments let us be inspired and motivated by the ultimate

goal of our work which is the improvement of the situation of people that have historically been among the most disempowered in society and that the principles of equality and non-discrimination can become a reality.

Thank you.
