

Draft African statement on the IGWG on Durban and the Ad Hoc Committee on
Complementary Standards

Thank you Mr. President,

Not having had the chance to do so during the discussion of last week, the African Group would like to comment on the presentations of their excellencies Ambassadors Dayan Jayatilleka and Idriss Jazairy ~~for their~~ on the meetings of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards, respectively. The African Group commends both Chairpersons on their able leadership ~~of~~ these two important mechanisms.

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Mr. President,

The African Group welcomes the convening of the first part of the sixth session of the IGWG on Durban in January of this year. This session was held in the midst of difficult circumstances, due to the transition in the chairmanship of the Working Group. The African Group expresses its appreciation to its Chairperson for his approach ~~to~~ *and* efforts in ensuring a successful meeting.

The review and follow-up to the implementation of the DDPA is a continuous and necessary exercise, even while the international community is engaged in preparations for the Durban Review Conference. In fact, the importance of taking stock of the progress achieved in implementing the DDPA, while looking ahead to the Durban Review Conference, cannot be overemphasized.

Regrettably, the review of some of the core provisions and issues contained in the DDPA, or even discussion, has not been possible to date. Some of the positions advanced during the January meeting of the Working Group, and indeed in previous years, have impeded any attempt to conduct meaningful deliberations on a number of specific issues.

Everyone must summon the necessary political will if this Council, and the world at large, were to make real progress in the fight against racism. This also requires negotiating in good faith, and ending the type of posturing which has

marred discussions in recent years on the anti-racism agenda, for considerations extraneous to human rights.

Nevertheless, the African Group welcomes the fact that the Working Group was able to produce an initial contribution to the Durban Review Process. This effort will have to be complemented in future sessions.

For the time being, the African Group deeply regrets that agreement on future themes to be discussed by the Working Group could not be reached. We sincerely hope that certain attitudes would change sooner rather than later. We look forward to the consultations to be held under the auspices of the Chairperson of the Working Group.

Mr. President,

The holding of the first part of the first session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards last February was most timely, and signals new hope for fulfilling one of the core mandates of the DDPA which has not been possible, or rather been made not possible, to date.

The able guidance ^{was held} of Ambassador Jazairy provided an atmosphere where rich discussions on all contribution and reports presented to the Ad Hoc Committee, despite the fact that divergences, and even hesitation to implement commitments undertaken in the World Conference Against racism, on the part of some, were still apparent.

The mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee is clear and bears no interpretation. We expect progress to be made at the second part of the session to be held later this year. Human Rights Council decision 3/103 has given clear guidance to the Human Rights Council on the issue of complementary standards, including incitement to racial and religious hatred.

The exercise of elaborating complementary standards stands to strengthen protection for the victims of racism and racial discrimination. The African Group looks forward to engaging in constructive negotiations with all concerned on draft complementary standards. Such submissions will not imply finality of the exercise but rather the beginning. The consideration of specific texts would represent a more advanced format for this exercise, and we look forward to be able to achieve our common objectives during the future meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, and as we approach the first substantive meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference, the African Group ^{would} like to reiterate its call on each and every party and stakeholder to summon the necessary political will with a view to making the Durban Review Conference a success.

If the Council, the prime UN human rights body that acts as the Durban Prep-Com, were to fail this mission and more globally its anti-racism agenda, the very relevance of the Council ^{would} be put in doubt, and the implications of such an undesirable eventuality ^{would} certainly transcend the Durban review ~~proves~~ ^{process} to all the vital mechanisms and functions of the Council. Let's all be guided by political will not political considerations, the universality of human rights not selectivity and partiality, and first and foremost, the plight of all the victims of racism.

I thank you.