

23/04/08

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Statement by Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC, under agenda item 6, during the First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference, Geneva, 23 April 2008

Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the OIC.

We welcome this opportunity to discuss the objectives of the Durban Review Conference, which should lead us to redefine all manifestation of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in the contemporary times, as well as to suggest possible measures to deal with these scourges.

There is a need to have a frank and open discussion on every single issue that comes under the umbrella of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. The exercise that we are embarking on is not and should not be directed against one community, race, religion, region or grouping. In the wise words of Mr. Doudu Diene it is not a clash between the North and South. Rather it's a scourge which is present in all parts of the world. Hence, we need to stand together to fight this common enemy with collective resolve and all available resources.

In the foreword to DDPA Ms Mary Robinson, then High Commissioner for Human Rights pointed that DDPA addresses past manifestations as well as contemporary forms of racial discrimination. Documents coming out from the Review conference should also address all past and contemporary manifestations of racism and racial discrimination.

With regard to the first part of the objective No. 1, we agree that there is a need to comprehensively review the implementation of the DDPA at different levels and find best practices to ensure its effective implementation. In this regard, reports of the working group on effective implementation of DDPA, replies of the states and other relevant mechanisms as well as results of the regional preparatory conferences should be able to guide us in the right direction.

As regards to the debate of contemporary forms of racism, we would refer to a series of very authentic and well researched reports by the Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. Yesterday, the Special Rapporteur testified once again that there is an increase in the incidence of racism even as the old and new manifestations persist. Hence, there is a need to deal with this menace in all its forms with all available tools at our disposal. A number of independent reports including some from the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia substantiate the Special Rapporteur's findings. In his recent report Mr. Diene cites three specific worrying trends in the contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance namely: a) Erosion of political will to combat racism and xenophobia; b) growing political trivialization of racism and xenophobia, and c) intellectual legitimization of racist and xenophobic discourse and rhetoric.

Intellectual and political resistance to multiculturalism is one of the root causes of the resurgence of racist and xenophobic violence. Rejection of diversity has led to the negation of the very humanity of the immigrants, foreigners and minorities. The most serious manifestation of racism is the democratic legitimization of racism and xenophobia in the guise of defending 'national identity or preference'. The OIC condemns all forms of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Christianophobia, racism and racial discrimination. No country, religion or minority should be discriminated on these grounds.

The OIC is concerned that these trends have actually led to the defamation of religions, particularly Islam. In this regard, the most disturbing phenomenon is the intellectual and ideological validation of Islamophobia. When it is expressed against migrants it takes the form of religio-ethnic or religio-racial tones, when it is expressed in the form of defamation of religions, it takes cover behind the freedom of expression and when it is expressed in the form of profiling it takes the cover of the war against terrorism. We, therefore, would like to work with all partners to devise normative standards that provide adequate guarantees against defamation of religions and religious intolerance.

Madam Chair, we would also like to reiterate that with this reiteration of our views that we have stated today, we stand ready to work under any mechanism to build on the areas of commonalities as well as to discuss and negotiate the differences to bridge possible gaps and avoidable differences. In working towards these goals, the OIC assures you of its most constructive engagement that should base on removing the deficiencies in the available norms rather than blocking progress on any future consensual outcome. The upcoming Durban Review Conference should provide us all an opportunity to discuss all manifestations of racism as well as suggest the most practical and efficient solutions to deal with them.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.
