

Human Rights Council, 8th Session

Item 9:

"Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action"

EU statement

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*¹, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this declaration.

The fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a priority for the EU. Almost seven years have passed since Durban, where we succeeded after intense negotiations to agree on a declaration and program of action to intensify the fight against racism. The consensus obtained in Durban on sometimes potentially divisive issues must be preserved. Our focus in the review process must be on building further on the common understanding reached by the international community and to strengthen the implementation of our commitments. This implies a common effort to review the work that was done in implementing our commitments since 2001. We urge all States to take a constructive, inclusive approach to the conference to preserve what has sometimes been a fragile consensus.

We have over the past weeks taken all necessary decisions on the procedural framework for the review conference. We welcome the efforts which have been made by all different regional groups in the Council to come to this result while maintaining a consensus. The date of 20th of April is relatively close and we must now start the substantial preparation for the review conference.

The EU will bring substantial elements to the review conference. Since 2001 we in the EU have intensified our efforts to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance both a national and a regional level. In many ways, we have obtained substantial results and can come forward with a number of advances and good practices.

For example, Member States have implemented the European Race and Employment Directives, creating a common level of protection against discrimination across the EU. We have agreed a Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia to create a common level of protection under the criminal law.

¹ * *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process*

And we have expanded the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to create a Fundamental Rights Agency.

We are pleased to learn that first negotiations will start over the summer. The European Union will participate actively. The OHCHR in their capacity as Secretariat will be instrumental in delivering a successful review conference and we call on OHCHR to provide the fullest possible support to this important area of work. We also look forward to the useful input which the CERD committee as one of the main actors at UN level can further make in the review exercise.

A final point is the role for civil society. In the course of the preparation process we must increasingly involve the non-Governmental sector. Their active role in the next PrepCom as well as in the review conference must build on the excellent practices followed by this Council. The decision to choose Geneva as the venue for the review conference will facilitate the best possible and active participation by civil society. The EU will follow the question of NGO participation closely and believes their active participation in both the preparatory process and of the Conference is of key importance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
