

ITEM 9 UK NATIONAL STATEMENT

The United Kingdom subscribes to the EU statement delivered by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union and would like to add the following comments in a national capacity.

The United Kingdom wants the Durban Review Conference to contribute to the global fight against the problems of racism facing the world today.

The UK brought to Durban a strong and long-standing commitment to tackling racism, discrimination and intolerance. The UK took seriously the commitments it entered into at Durban in 2001. Since then, we have further strengthened our laws and policies to tackle racism, discrimination and intolerance and to promote equality and cohesion.

We have stepped up our fight against hatred and extremism, extending our laws on racially motivated crime to include specific religiously aggravated offences that attract higher criminal penalties.

The UK has built up a strong body of anti-discrimination legislation since the 1960s. We strengthened this by incorporating the European Race, Gender and Employment Directives into domestic law.

We have extended the law to prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and sexual orientation. In 2007, our new Equality and Human Rights Commission

started work, concentrating the enforcement of our equality laws into a single powerful body.

In 2005, we launched a 3-year national strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion. This meets the Government's commitments agreed at Durban, including the development of a national action plan against racism. Like the Durban programme of action, its focus is on key areas like education, the labour market, health, housing and the criminal justice system, as well as tackling racism and extremism.

2007 marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade throughout the then British Empire. We reflected on the legacies of that abhorrent trade and considered how this part of our history shaped our present.

The Durban review process provides an opportunity to learn from each other, to share best practice and help us all develop measures to combat racism.

We replied to the questionnaire distributed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We urge States who have yet to submit their response to do so as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman

To address effectively the problems of racism in the world today, the Durban Review Conference must address all issues contained in the DDPA, including multiple forms of discrimination.

Given the particular history of the 2001 conference, we want the conference to address anti-Semitism and Holocaust remembrance, both important parts of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.. We will find unacceptable any attempt to trivialise or deny the Holocaust, or to renegotiate the unique nature of anti-Semitism. Similarly, allowing the review conference to single out a specific geographic situation would critically damage prospects for consensus.

We cannot accept any attempts to limit freedom of expression in the name of promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. While fully recognising that limitations to the exercise of freedom of expression may be permitted in certain circumstances under international law, the UK believes that the framework agreed in the ICCPR strikes the right balance between freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief.

Mr Chairman

The 2001 World Conference Against Racism was the product of difficult negotiations. This led to some soul-searching within the UK as to whether Durban was the most effective vehicle to take forward our commitment to the fight against racism. We decided to give the process the benefit of the doubt and we have engaged

constructively in Durban follow-up. This has not always been straightforward, but we welcome compromises made by all sides to get to where we are today.

The challenge for member states now is to make the conference a success, to avoid division amongst us, and to restore a positive, credible international consensus that aims to address racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination and intolerance wherever they occur.

Thank you Mr Chairman.