



Human Rights Council Third Session

African Group Statement in introduction on L.2 entitled "Preparations for the Durban Review Conference"

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On behalf of the African Group

Mr President,

This statement is presented on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group decided during the resumed second session of the Council to defer consideration of its draft proposal on this subject to the current session. This postponement was with the aim of undertaking broad consultations with all interested parties. During the course of consultations and based on the concerns of some of the parties, the Group decided to separate the two main elements of its original text into two separate resolutions. These resolutions are being presented to the Council for consideration as documents L.2 and L.3 respectively.

The Third Committee of the General Assembly decided through its resolution L.53/Rev.1 to convene the Durban Review Conference in 2009 and requested that this Council should undertake preparations for this event, including presenting a concrete plan to the Assembly next year. In view of this decision and its implications for the Council, the African Group decided to introduce draft resolution L.2 which we now have before us.

The African Group shares the view that preparations for this Review Conference should follow the established practice of the General Assembly when it comes to matters of arranging United Nations Conferences and Summits, including their Review processes.

In compliance with the above-mentioned 3rd Committee Resolution no new body will be created to act as Preparatory Committee as it is suggested that the Human Rights Council itself undertake this task. As directed by L.53/Rev.1, it would do so, making use of the three existing mechanisms i.e the Eminent Experts, the intergovernmental Working Group on Implementation and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

What is important for us is that the Assembly has clearly decided on convening the Durban Review Conference. The details for the Durban Review Conference agreed by the 3rd Committee cannot be pre-empted. These will be decided in the Preparatory Committee at its organisational session in May 2007. We expect the Bureau of the Council to respond positively to the General Assembly by ensuring that it guides the Council appropriately in the establishment of the Preparatory Committee. Such guidance should be based on the experience and practices followed by the erstwhile Commission on Human Rights with respect to its preparations for both the Vienna and Durban Conferences.

In terms of L.2, the African Group envisages two substantive sessions of ten days each for the Preparatory Committee. These sessions in our view should concentrate on the anticipated outcome of the Review Conference. The outcome document should be given a proper theme by the organisational session of the PrepCom. It is for this reason that we decided at this stage to limit ourselves to a generic title for L.2, namely, "Preparations for the Durban Review Conference". As soon as the specific theme has been decided upon by the PrepCom, it will then replace the generic title in future resolutions on this issue.

The African Group appreciates the spirit demonstrated by all interested parties during the negotiations of L.2. We may not have been able to accommodate the concerns of all the interested parties. However we believe that our resolution is firmly predicated on the accepted and established practices of the General Assembly and for that reason should enjoy the overwhelming support of the members of the Council.

I thank you.