

MD. MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN  
COUNSELLOR

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**Statement by the Bangladesh delegation on the report of the Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia, 11 June 2007**

Mr. President,

My delegation appreciates the Special Rapporteur for his objective and impartial depiction of the current picture of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. His findings in Europe are particularly alarming. What is more worrisome is the growing "democratic legitimization" of the phenomenon, by the spread of racist and xenophobic political platforms. This ideological acceptance of racism, particularly in dealing with the question of immigration, asylum and terrorism has worsened the already delicate situation. The unhealthy tendency to establish a dogmatic and ideological hierarchy of the freedoms, such as freedom of expression, to the detriment of other freedoms has only compounded the problem.

The Special Rapporteur has provided us a portrait of stereotyping of Muslims in the West. The tendency to associate Islam with violence and terrorism, both in the political discourse and in the media, has a profound impact on the popular perception. It is seen as the main reason for the upsurge and spread of Islamophobia. The intolerance is manifested by the creation of obstacles to the construction of places of worship and non-acceptance of Islamic cultural expressions and symbols. What is frustrating is the lack of political will and inaction to reverse this phenomenon.

As the Special Rapporteur has said, we have to combat racism in two fronts - political and legal. The Governments must demonstrate its political will to fight racism and xenophobia. On the other hand they should put in place legal and administrative mechanisms, in line with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Only through two-pronged approach we may achieve the desired result.

Intellectual and political resistance to multiculturalism has been one of the root causes of the resurgence of racism and xenophobia. Intercultural dialogue would therefore be essential for societies undergoing multiculturalization. A systematic campaign against incitement to racial and religious hatred has to be waged. In this regard, a careful balance between the freedom of expression and respect for the religion must be maintained. Rights must not be exercised without respect and responsibility.