



Statement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

at

the Durban Review Conference

delivered by

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Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Head of Delegation

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Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by commending the leading role that Ms. Navi Pillay, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has played in organizing this Conference, as well as her tireless endeavours to reach a consensus of opinion on its final outcome document. I would also like to thank the Chairperson of the Conference Preparatory Committee, as well as the Chairman of the Working Group on the drafting of the Conference document, and extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Amos Wako, the President of the Conference, to whom I wish every success in his tasks

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference is important in view of the fact that the world is still suffering from various forms of racism in both the developing and the developed countries, as a result of which the international community needs to take effective measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In spite of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 2001, the causes that are fostering racism are increasing in our contemporary world and we wish to express our concern at a number of phenomena that are among the causes and sources of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the negative phenomena that our contemporary world is witnessing is the increasing frequency of attacks on religious personalities and symbols, especially in some countries, which is fomenting and spreading hatred and aggravating intolerance. While respecting and esteeming the principle of freedom of expression, we feel that it is unacceptable that freedom of expression should be protected and defended at the expense of other violations of human rights. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns defamation of religions and beliefs and disparagement of the personalities and symbols not only of the Islamic religion but of other religions and beliefs. We condemn the defamation of all prophets, whether Muhammad, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (peace and blessings be upon them) or others and, therefore, in this forum we are calling for effective and practical steps to address this issue in such a way as to curb the

phenomenon of intolerance and xenophobia in accordance with paragraph 150 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Reference must also be made to the fact that some groups and peoples throughout the world are being subjected, in one way or another, to a number of racist practices. This is illustrated by the sufferings of the population of the occupied Arab territories and, in particular, by the manner in which the rights of the Palestinian people have been violated for decades. The racist separation wall has had adverse effects and serious consequences on the economic, social and cultural situation of the Palestinian people. Both Christian and Muslim Palestinians are being prevented from exercising their right to freedom of worship and access to their holy places in the City of Jerusalem, the population of which is being subjected to pressures and illegal measures to force them to leave the City. Moreover, restrictions are placed on the freedom of movement of persons and goods; the Gaza Strip remains under blockade; and settlements are still being constructed in the occupied Palestinian territories. In this connection, we wish to draw attention to the reference made to the Palestinian people in the Durban document of 2001, and particularly paragraph 151 of the Declaration and Programme of Action which emphasizes the need to respect human rights, international humanitarian law and the principle of self-determination and to put an end to all the forms of suffering that are being faced by the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attaches the utmost importance to the issue of racial discrimination and is endeavouring to prevent the occurrence of practices involving discrimination or racism. In this regard, the laws in force in the Kingdom prohibit the establishment of organizations which are of a racist character or which support or advocate racial discrimination. They also stipulate that it is a criminal offence for anyone to fund racist activities or issue pamphlets or material inciting hatred. The Kingdom's anti-racism legislation is derived from the provisions of the Islamic Shari'a, which emphasizes equality and human dignity regardless of gender, colour or race. That legislation is also consistent with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the other related international instruments and conventions to which the Kingdom has acceded.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, being aware of the vital role of dialogue in combating intolerance, has taken numerous steps to this end. At the domestic level, it has established a Centre for National Dialogue which, in the course of only a few years, has provided an appropriate environment for national dialogue

among all social groups by helping to promote constructive dialogue based on moderation in a manner conducive to justice, equality and freedom of expression within a comprehensive framework of mutual respect for all cultures and beliefs while, at the same time, seeking to disseminate a culture of human rights in which the exercise of these rights will be protected.

In keeping with this policy and with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's awareness of the importance of all forms of dialogue at all levels to eliminate the causes of intolerance and nurture a spirit of cooperation among States and followers of various religions and cultures, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, convened a meeting of Muslim scholars and theologians at Makkah, followed by the World Conference on Dialogue at Madrid which was held under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and His Majesty the King of Spain. That Conference, which was attended by theologians and scholars representing various religions and philosophical doctrines, issued the Madrid Declaration affirming the unity of origin of mankind and the need to respect human dignity and human rights and warning of the dangers of campaigns that seek to intensify discord and disrupt peaceful coexistence.

In the light of the positive outcome of the Madrid Conference on Dialogue, the General Assembly of the United Nations held a meeting last November, at the request of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, which was attended by a large number of world leaders and high-ranking personalities. During the meeting, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said that the participating States had drawn attention to the need to develop dialogue, mutual understanding and tolerance among peoples, as well as respect for their diverse religions, customs, traditions and beliefs.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to conclude by emphasizing the importance of this Conference and calling upon all its participants to combat the causes and sources of tendencies towards racism and intolerance in all their forms by promulgating laws and legislative enactments to prevent the proliferation of hatred and racism.

Thank you, Mr. President