



Seventh session of the Intergovernmental Working Group
on the Effective Implementation of the
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG)



Opening Statement

by

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG).

This meeting takes place six months after the successful conclusion the Durban Review Conference. Your efforts during this land-mark event helped to renew consensus in the universal condemnations of some of the most important scourges of our time: racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group, Ambassador Dayan Jayatilika of Sri Lanka, who guided the sixth session of this mechanism, ensuring the successful finalization and transmission of the Group's contribution to the Durban Review Conference. We look forward to working closely with a new chair of this Group to ensure the success of your meetings.

The task ahead is significant. The Durban Review Outcome Document contains important action points that open new horizons for States to act at the national, regional and international levels. I hope that the spirit of cooperation that reigned over the Conference will continue to inspire and guide your efforts to combat old and new manifestations of these serious violations of human rights.

There are many lessons from the Durban review process and no doubt that the need for international cooperation is key amongst them. We also need to keep our attention focused on the victims and what we can do to ensure that we adequately address their plight. In many ways, our work is re-starting, not ending, because the real success of the review conference can only be measured against the results of the implementation of its outcome. The commitments that were made need to be translated into concrete action that positively impact lives of victims and prevent further violations. Concrete and effective policies and programmes must be implemented in order to accelerate equal access to human rights by all and especially individuals who have been marginalized as a consequence of discrimination. The Intergovernmental Working Group can play a central role in this regard.

From our side, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office are committed to continue to spare no effort to encourage the full realization of this vision. We are determined to build on the momentum gained from the Durban Review Conference and in this regard, strengthen the anti-racism programme of the Office.

Towards this end, the High Commissioner established in May 2009 an in-house Task Force on Durban Follow-Up to develop a proposal for an OHCHR programme on racism and intolerance. The Task Force is recommending a programme that includes the following components: supporting Durban follow-up mechanisms; building national capacity to combat racism, discrimination and intolerance; strengthening awareness raising, including through the carrying out of expert seminars; enhancing research, analysis, and the collection of good practices; and facilitating the integration of the anti-racism agenda in UN activities.

The High Commissioner's objective is to ensure that the follow-up to Durban is an office-wide activity, and to enhance collaboration with UN entities in order to ensure effective mainstreaming of the anti-racism agenda. We hope to be able to work efficiently and collaboratively with States, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations. The result of our reflections will be presented to Member States soon including in the context of the General Assembly's discussion. I should add that OHCHR would need additional resources to implement such a programme and we count on your support for the process in the General Assembly in this regard.

Let me conclude by stressing that with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference, we have a comprehensive agenda for advancing the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Let us act efficiently and responsibly to ensure its implementation. We need to remain united in our collective action.

I wish you a fruitful session.

Thank you

