

Durban Statement

Thank you, Mr. President.

We share the concern that many persons worldwide are still subject to racism. The United States remains committed to the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.

My government firmly believes, however, that it is not a new instrument like the proposed Optional Protocol, but the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination that will help us reach our shared goal of eliminating all forms of racial discrimination.

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination has itself stated that, "It is the States' failure to ratify or implement the Convention, rather than gaps in the Convention itself, which the Committee has identified as the key issue in combating contemporary forms of racism."

We join the Secretary General and others in urging the Council as a new institution to focus on implementation, rather than norm creation, at this time. As noted by High Commissioner Arbour in her speech last Monday, "Victims of human rights abuses all over the world, and future generations will judge us by our willingness and ability to shed the comfort of habit, to fight inertia, reject expediency, and fulfill promises with action."

If there is, however, a continued desire to discuss complementary standards or additional instruments to address gaps in international human rights law with respect to racism, the appropriate forum is with the States Parties to the Convention. Article 23 describes the procedure for proposing amendments to the Convention, and it is for the States Parties to treaties to determine through the relevant treaty mechanisms whether or how to amend such instruments.

Thank you, Mr. President.