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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE**

AT

**THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION
OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE
DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE**

**GENEVA
27 AUGUST 2007**

**Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan, Pakistan's Permanent Representative,
on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), at the
Organizational Session of the Preparatory Committee of the
Durban Review Conference, August 27, 2007**

Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

We congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee. Your wide experience in the field of human rights, your inclusive and transparent approach, and your early and earnest endeavours to steer the entire process towards a successful outcome make you an ideal leader for the Durban Review Conference. The OIC stands firmly behind your efforts and initiatives.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate and thank members of the Bureau who have been working studiously and systematically during this summer.

While publishing the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference Against Racism held in 2001, the United Nations introduced the subject as follows: "Although the standard of non-discrimination has been established as a bedrock principle of international law, the persistence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance clearly demonstrate the need to look for new ways to address this problem with more resolve, with more humanity and with greater efficiency." Durban was thus just a beginning. The Durban Review Conference should take us several steps further towards fighting discrimination in all its forms.

But before talking about the objectives of the Durban Review we would like to clarify our position on some of the procedural and organizational issues that will be discussed during this session.

One, We support widest possible participation of the NGOs, while staying close to ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 and other established practices. A reasonably flexible formula will enhance representation of the voices of the victims of racism and racial discrimination.

Two, We should consult and invite all relevant mechanisms including special procedures. We urge the Secretary General to allocate resources for this purpose.

Three, Sufficient budgetary allocations must be made to give adequate financial and technical support to the preparatory process.

Four, A new Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) should be created to collate and review the contributions and to present the outcome to the Preparatory Committee. The IGWG could later take on the tasks of drafting

and negotiating the final outcome document of the Durban Review Conference.

Five, The PrepCom, because of its universal membership and in the interest of efficiency, may submit its recommendations and decisions directly to the General Assembly. Simultaneously, it may keep the Human Rights Council fully informed. We should avoid unseemly legal nitpicking and wrangling on this point.

Six, The second session of the PrepCom in 2008 should not conflict with the fall session of the UNGA Third Committee.

Apart from the organizational matters, we have two challenges: (i) How to come up with a substantive outcome which is concrete and adds value to what we have already done? and (ii) How to deal with the smear campaign against the Durban Review Conference. In fact, the short answer to both the questions is: dialogue with patience and resilience.

First, the substance.

Critics of the Review Conference have said that this Conference will only "mimic the format and script" of the WCAR. The review conference should indeed reaffirm and reiterate the Declaration and the Programme of Action. At the same time, we have to evolve an operational strategy to effectively combat existing as well as new and more sinister forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The tools identified in 2001 must be tested and used. We also need a bigger tool box to fight the rising tide of racism, hate and intolerance under different garbs.

Intellectual and political resistance to multiculturalism is one of the root causes of the resurgence of racist and xenophobic violence. Rejection of diversity has led to the negation of the very humanity of the immigrants, foreigners and minorities. The most serious manifestation of racism is the democratic legitimization of racism and xenophobia in the guise of defending 'national identity or preference'.

The world since 2001 has not remained static and witnessed new forms of racism and racial discrimination. Reports of Special Rapporteur Dodou Diene on contemporary forms of racism have pointed to subtle forms of racism and racial discrimination that reflect a deep political, ethical and intellectual malaise. His recent report cites that minority Muslims around the globe face retribution in their host countries for the actions taken by terrorists. There has been a stark rise in hate crimes, discrimination, racial profiling and intolerance against Muslims in many countries.

The reports of the Special Rapporteur reveal harrowing details of the contemporary forms of racism. The OIC requests that these reports be made part of official documents for the Review Conference. A number of independent reports including some from the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia substantiate the Special Rapporteur's findings.

The OIC is concerned that these trends have actually led to the defamation of religions particularly Islamophobia. Today, the defamation of Islam and discrimination against Muslims represent the most conspicuous demonstration of contemporary racism and intolerance. In this regard, the most disturbing phenomena is the intellectual and ideological validation of Islamophobia. It is regrettable that the world media has allowed defamation and blasphemy in this form.

The upcoming Durban Review Conference should provide us all an opportunity to discuss the contemporary scourge of racism as well as suggest the most practical and efficient solutions to deal with them. The importance of this fact is appropriately reflected in the OP6 of the HRC Resolution 3/2 that highlights the objectives of the conference.

Against this backdrop, we suggest early accent on the following objectives:

- a) Enhanced international and regional cooperation and dialogue to put the fight against racism on the global agenda.
- b) Examination of the availability and effectiveness of the international legal and judicial mechanisms for provision of justice to the victims.
- c) Effective implementation of national plans envisaging tougher laws and legal assistance to the victims of racial discrimination.
- d) The Conference should move the spotlight on the continued plight of Palestinian people and non-recognition of their inalienable right to self-determination.
- e) Ways to fight new forms of racism and racial discrimination, including incitement to racial and religious intolerance; racial profiling and stereotyping in the fight against terrorism; and rejection of diversity and multiculturalism.
- f) More investment in educational and awareness raising measures.
- g) Shift of emphasis to victims-oriented approaches, with specific reference to Africans and persons of African descent, Asians and persons of Asian descent, indigenous people, migrant, refugees, minorities, and others.
- h) Effective and optimal use of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

As to the smear campaign, the OIC's advice is that the PrepCom leadership and members should stay the course and not be distracted by the negative propaganda. Without any acrimony, the PrepCom should persevere in engaging all interlocutors and stakeholders.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.