Israel Explanation of Vote on a Resolution on the Durban Declaration and Program of Action at the U.N. General Assembly Third Committee

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Thank you, Mr. Chair.  Twenty years after the Durban Conference, Israel once again calls for a vote on this resolution.  During the High-Level week of this session of the General Assembly, some of the member states commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the 2001 Durban Conference.  Others, we are happy to note, realized that it was not an event that merits commemoration.

Israel finds it important to remind the Committee why we called for a vote on this resolution and why the commemoration of this event is, to say the least, questionable.  On September 8, 2001, the countries from around the world, including Israel, gathered in good faith in Durban, South Africa for the purpose of combatting racism.  Sadly, as the conference unfolded, it became clear that although the majority of countries gathered to united in a common fight against racism, a small number of participants saw it as no more than a political opportunity.

The conference turned into a platform of delegitimization, dehumanizing and defaming of the State of Israel, acts that at the very least have nothing to do with fighting racism, if are not outright racist in their own regard.  Israel had no choice but to withdraw from the Durban Conference in 2001, and eight years later, together with other countries, from the 2009 Review Conference, which has proven that no lesson was learned from what happened in 2001.  Some would even say that the 2009 Review Conference merely clarified that what happened in 2001 was not a bug in the Durban process but a feature, so to speak.

Mr. Chair, what the Durban Conference achieved, including in its outcome document, is a long-lasting damage to the fight against racism.  It has mainstreamed political agendas into that fight, turning it from a consensual and global effort into yet another act in the theater that the UN is sometimes.  I wish to conclude by expressing our hope that the UN will find a way to come together to fight racism, as it is one of the most important standing issues today, and one we neglect to address properly.  But the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is not the way.  Thank you.