United States 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.

The United States is committed to countering racism and racial discrimination in all its forms, at home and abroad.  In his first weeks in office, President Biden put forward a whole of government strategy to embed racial justice and equity for marginalized populations across federal agencies, policies, and programs.  At the 46th session of the Human Rights Council, the United States also led a joint statement signed by 158 countries condemning racism and racial discrimination and resolving to do more to address systemic racism.

The United States is committed to working with partners to promote racial and ethnic equity, as we host the Summit for Democracy in December and approach the final two years of the International Decade for People of African Descent.  The United States also strongly supported the creation of a Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

The United States believes the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination provides comprehensive protections in this area and constitutes the most relevant international framework to address all forms of racial discrimination.

In addition, we remain deeply concerned about speech that advocates national, racial, or religious hatred, particularly when it constitutes discrimination, hostility, or incitement to violence.  We remain convinced that the best antidote to offensive speech is a combination of robust legal protections against discrimination and hate crimes, pro-active outreach to racial and religious minority communities, and the vigorous protection of freedom of expression, both online and offline.

As in previous years, we deeply regret that we cannot support this resolution, which does not genuinely focus on countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.  Among our concerns is the resolution’s endorsement of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the outcome of the Durban Review Conference, and its endorsement of overbroad restrictions of freedoms of speech and expression.  We reject any effort to advance the full implementation of the DDPA.  We believe this resolution serves as a vehicle to prolong divisions, rather than providing an inclusive way forward for the international community to counter the scourge of racism and racial discrimination.

In addition, the United States cannot accept the resolution’s call for states to consider withdrawing reservations to Article 4 of the UN CERD.  Further, this resolution has no effect as a matter of international law.

We also reject the resolution’s call for former colonial powers to provide reparations consistent with the DDPA.  Thank you, Chair.