**Israel Welcomes Canadian Decision to Boycott Durban III**

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A government official welcomed on Saturday night Canada’s decision to boycott “Durban III,” a United Nations conference on racism which is expected to be held next September in New York.

“Canada is a staunch friend of Israel and has stood up for what is right in international forums where Israel is routinely bashed,” the government official said.

Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney on Thursday said Canada has lost faith in the Durban process. “Canada is clearly committed to the fight against racism, but the Durban process commemorates an agenda that actually promotes racism rather than combats it.” He added that the event had negatively targeted Israel.

Next year’s event commemorates the 10th anniversary of the initial Durban conference that saw the United States and Israel walk out to protest the ‘anti-Semitic atmosphere,’ and during which Israel was branded a racist and apartheid state.

The initial conference, which ended days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, produced the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The 62-page document from that conference, solely singled out Israel.

Canada led a boycott of Durban II in Geneva last year, where Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad railed against the Jewish state.

In addition to Canada, eight other countries boycotted the conference: Australia, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, and the US.

This week, a UN committee adopted a resolution calling for the commemorative meeting on September 21 to “reaffirm that the [original Durban declaration] provides the most comprehensive UN framework for combating racism.”

“We voted against this because we believe that the proposed meeting will only perpetuate the kind of... divisive rhetoric that led Canada to boycott this process in the past,” said Kenney.