**Australia pulls out of Durban conference**

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**AUSTRALIA has pulled out of the United Nations Durban conference to combat racism on grounds that it would likely to be a repeat of the initial racist and anti-semitic event.**

A spokesperson for Prime Minister Julia Gillard said Australia had decided not to attend the High Level Meeting on the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action scheduled to be held in New York on September 22.

Referred to as the Durban conference after the original event held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, the meeting was aimed at combating global racism. However, it was marred by anti-Semitism.

Australia and many other countries walked out of the first meeting while the Kevin Rudd government subsequently boycotted the second conference in 2009, which saw Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad deliver a long tirade against Israel.

Ms Gillard's spokesman said Australia remained involved in the early stages of consultations on the High Level Meeting in order to oppose attempts to endorse extreme language or explicit references in the text of the Durban Declaration.

"But we have not been convinced that the High Level Meeting will avoid unbalanced criticism of Israel and the airing of anti-Semitic views," the spokesman said in a statement.

"This occurred at the original Durban World Conference on Racism (2001) and the subsequent Review Conference (2009). Australia did not attend either conference.

"Nor would Australia be able to support a meeting that chooses to reaffirm the original Durban Declaration, as appears likely."