



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

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at the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 62nd Session of the UNGA

on

'Elimination of racism and racial discrimination' [Agenda item 68].

New York, 07 November 2007

Mr. Chairman, the world today is going through major political, economic and social transformations, which often unleash new generation of discrimination and injustice. Various new manifestations of intolerance towards vulnerable groups, ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, refugees and migrant workers are on the rise. It is unfortunate that in this era of post-modernism and global interconnectivity, racism and racial discrimination still persist as an affront to human civilization.

I thank the Special Rapporteur for his comprehensive interim report on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We share the recommendations and conclusions contained in his report and call for their proper implementation.

Mr. Chairman, we are deeply concerned about the regression in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination. This is attributed to the emergence of several potent and ominous trends: the growing political acceptance and democratic legitimization of racism and xenophobia by virtue of their use as political, intellectual and media platforms; the increase of racism in national elites; the resurgence of racist violence; and the rise in historical revisionism. All these trends pose a grave threat to democracy and human rights undermining the basis fabric of the society.

The legitimization of racism and xenophobia is eroding the very existence of distinct values of national minorities and immigrants. This gives rise to identity crises and brews racial and religious hatred. Defamation of religion is also on the rise. These are creating an ideological divide which, as rightly pointed out in the report, constitute a dangerous slide towards a clash of civilization and religion. This must be arrested.

Mr. Chairman, state has a responsibility to weed out hatred and intolerance and protect its citizens particularly the minorities and vulnerable sections through effective national measures. We are convinced that 'hatred' can be overcome through proper education that inculcates a 'culture of peace'. There must not be any impunity for perpetrators of hate crimes. Domestic laws must be reinforced and made compatible with the relevant international instruments. National institutions have to be strengthened for implementing the legal safeguards. The civil society and the media must make significant contribution towards raising awareness against racism and establishing religious and communal harmony. However, without effective and

wide ranging cooperation and concerted efforts of the international community, fight against racism will remain an unmet challenge.

Mr. Chairman, the Constitution of Bangladesh expressly prohibits discrimination against any of its citizens on grounds of race, religion, caste or creed, gender or place of birth. It guarantees equality before law, and of opportunity for all citizens and provides affirmative action for particularly disadvantaged groups. In accordance with our principled position, we reject and denounce racism and racist practices wherever and whenever they are perpetrated. Also as a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Bangladesh remains fully committed to uphold the sacred principles and objectives of the Convention.

We strongly advocate the importance of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue to promote reciprocal understanding among various religions, belief and cultures. We have further reaffirmed this principle in the recently held high-level dialogue on Inter-religious and Inter-cultural understanding and cooperation for peace in New York on 4 October 2007. This element has also found reflection in our flagship draft resolution on 'Culture of Peace' this year. We believe this would receive the support of a record number of member states as in the past.

Mr. Chairman, as a result of our relentless campaign, we have now been able to ensure basic freedoms and rights for majority of our peoples. But new forms of racism and intolerance threaten to undermine our achievements. It is unfortunate that immigrants and asylum-seekers often face severe discrimination. We urge upon the international community to protect the rights of the migrant workers. Their cultural and religious specificities must be respected. Their identities and ability to enrich national cultures must be recognized.

We must renew our commitment to the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We need to launch concerted efforts to assess the progress made so far, as well as identify the challenges and obstacles that remain. In this connection, we welcome the initiative of the Human Rights Council to study the substantive gaps in the existing international instruments to combat racism and find the ways to bridge the gaps. We look forward to the Durban Review Conference in 2009.

We urge upon the member states to step forward in expression of political goodwill without which elimination of racism would remain ever elusive. We must live up to our obligation to reaffirm our commitment to foster respect, equality and diversity in our respective societies. My delegation reaffirms our unequivocal support for the efforts of the United Nations and international community towards the elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination. We fervently hope that the genuine and collective effort of everyone will extricate the world from this scourge.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.
