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**Statement by Ms. Najat Al-Hajjaji,**

**CHAIRPERSON  
PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE**

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DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE**

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Third Committee  
Item 68: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination  
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New York

Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present to you, on behalf of Ambassador Najat Al Hajjaji, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference, the report of the first session of the Preparatory Committee.

The 2001 World Conference against Racism held in Durban moved forward the global agenda for the advancement of the rights of the most vulnerable. The Durban Conference focused on one of the most pernicious expressions of the non-respect of human rights that affects the lives of billions of people.

At the Durban Conference, people fought hard to achieve a consensual document. 170 countries unanimously adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, providing a new framework for combating racism and intolerance in the post apartheid era. In Durban, we emphasized core human rights values and standards, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination. We reaffirmed that cultural diversity should be valued, enjoyed, accepted and embraced as a permanent feature that enriches societies around the world. We recognized that no country is free from racism.

It was the first time that the international community had openly confronted the wrongs of the past. We recognized that colonialism and slavery led to racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance and those historic victims continue to be victims of its consequences. We also recognized with deep concern the increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in various parts of the world.

We underlined the need for better protection of the civil and political rights of victims of racism by ending discriminatory practices in the administration of justice, calling for legal assistance for victims, ensuring the prosecution of perpetrators of racist

acts, ending racial profiling, providing better human rights education for public officials, ensuring that all persons have effective and adequate remedies.

The Conference also focused on economic, social and cultural rights. We recognized the importance of combating poverty to empower those who are victims of racism. We adopted a wide array of concrete measures in the areas of employment, health, the environment, social services, education and awareness-raising that should better the lives of victims.

In sum, as the High Commissioner for Human Rights rightly pointed out, through the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, we unanimously challenged the historical, socio-economic and political structures that enabled racial discrimination to persist.

Six years have passed since the Durban Conference and many efforts have been made in the eradication of the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, despite continuing efforts, we continue to observe with concern that, unfortunately, racism and discrimination continue to be a root cause of numerous human rights violations.

A review conference will unite the global community in a determined struggle against this social evil. It will remind Member States of their commitments in Durban and give new impetus and strengthen commitments to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action fully. The forthcoming Durban Review Conference in 2009 offers an opportunity for all stakeholders to reflect on the reasons why, in spite of all the efforts made, we have not overcome all the manifestations of racism.

Mr. President,

I would like now to report on the work done by the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference which took place from 27 to 31 August in Geneva.

Let me start by thanking the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for their hard work in facilitating the adoption of decisions by consensus.

After lengthy and constructive dialogue, the Preparatory Committee was able to reach consensus on a number of significant issues, namely the objectives of the Review Conference, sources of funding and preparatory activities. Outstanding progress was made and the success of the session enabled us to provide a good road map to achieving our objectives in the run up to what we are all confident will be a successful Durban Review Conference in 2009.

I would like now to mention just some of the decisions adopted. Please note that this is only meant to be a summary of the key points:

- Decision 2 sets out the criteria and practices for participation of and consultation with observers, including non-governmental organizations, at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee;
- Decision 3 provides that the Durban Review Conference shall take place during the first half of 2009. Decision 6 provides that the venue of the Conference shall be decided at a later date. I should also like to note that pursuant to decisions 6 and 7, the Preparatory Committee decided that the venue of its sessions shall be Geneva and that the dates of its forthcoming sessions shall be April to May, and October 2008, respectively;
- Decision 5 by which the Preparatory Committee decided to request the Secretary-General to designate the High Commissioner for Human Rights as Secretary-General of the Durban Review Conference. I am convinced that this appointment is an asset for the success of the Durban Review Conference;
- Decisions 6 and 7 by which the Preparatory Committee decided that the venue of

its sessions shall be Geneva and that the dates of its forthcoming sessions shall be April to May, and October 2008, respectively. The venue of the Durban Review Conference shall be decided at a later date.

- Decision 8 recommends to the Human Rights Council that it adopt a decision inviting the Preparatory Committee to submit its reports to the General Assembly. I should like to note that the Council, at the first part of its sixth session, adopted decision 6/105 to that effect. I would also like to note Council resolution 6/23, which requests the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee to present her report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session covering the activities of the Preparatory Committee and progress made in preparation for the 2009 Durban Review Conference;
- Decision 9 by which we adopted provisional rules of procedure for the Durban Review Conference;
- Decision 10 on reports, studies and other documentation whereby the Preparatory Committee requested all relevant participants to assist it by undertaking review and submitting recommendations as contributions to the outcome of the Review Conference and also requested that a questionnaire be prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, under the supervision of the bureau, to be sent to all stakeholders immediately following the first session;
- Decision 11 related to preparatory meetings and activities at the international, regional and national levels for which reports of such activities should be submitted to the Preparatory Committee;
- Decision 12 by which the Preparatory Committee decided to request the United Nations Secretary-General to provide the necessary resources for the preparations for the Durban Review Conference and to consider providing, as appropriate, the necessary financial and technical assistance for the convening of regional preparatory meetings according to established practices. The Preparatory Committee also requested the High Commissioner to revitalize the voluntary fund for the Durban Review Conference;
- Decision 13 relates to the objectives of the Durban Review Conference. After much deliberation, the Preparatory Committee was agreed on the following

objectives:

1. To review progress and assess implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action by all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels, including assessing contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, through an inclusive, transparent and collaborative process and identify concrete measures and initiatives for combating and eliminating all manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to foster the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;
2. To assess the effectiveness of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms and other relevant United Nations mechanisms dealing with the issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to enhance them;
3. To promote the universal ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and proper consideration of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and
4. To identify and share good practices achieved in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

I also would like to refer you to decision 15 concerning the organization of work for the substantive sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the formulation of a concrete plan for the preparatory process.

Distinguished Delegates,

The work ahead of us is enormous, but I am encouraged to see the efforts displayed by the Preparatory Committee in ensuring the achievement of the goals of the first session. I will count on the participation of each and every one of you to make the

preparatory process of the Durban Review Conference a success.

We have a long way ahead of us and at times we will be faced with difficult and contentious issues. At these moments, let us be inspired and motivated by the ultimate goal of our work, which is the improvement of the situation of people that have historically been among the most disempowered in society so that the principles of equality and non-discrimination can become a reality.

Thank you.

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