

Joint Statement delivered by Ms. Giyoun Kim on behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) and Association of World Citizens (AWC)

7th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 9: Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) – General Debate

Wednesday, 26 March 2008

Thank you, Mr. President.

Again, we welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mr. Doudou Diene, in which he highlighted the erosion of the political will of states to fight racism and xenophobia and the spread of racism in politics as a global trend.

We would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the Council to the concerns expressed by the participants of the 1st Asian Regional Civil Society Workshop on the 2009 Durban Review Conference, held in Bangkok from 25-26 February 2008. The Workshop was attended by over 30 NGO participants from 10 countries in Asia, and was co-organized by FORUM-ASIA and IMADR.

We recognise that the DRC process poses both new opportunities and challenges for the human rights movement in Asia to address human rights issues related to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Therefore, we reaffirm our commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) held in Durban from 31 August to 8 September 2001.

Mr. President,

We would like to reiterate that more than 260 million people in Asia continue to suffer from caste- and descent-based discrimination, such as Dalits in South Asia and Buraku people in Japan. We are troubled by the insidious measures designed to prevent social interaction and mobility for Dalits, such as de facto segregation of Dalit children in school, restrictions on reservation for certain professional training, and non-allocation of designated budgets for Scheduled Castes as stipulated under government plans. Also troubling are the facts that Dalits are denied equal access to housing, settlement, cemeteries, common drinking water, restaurants and temples, and are subjected to restrictions on marriage.

Asia is home to many religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, among others. However, Asia today witnesses various forms of religious intolerance and conflicts, often linked to religious-based nationalism or political ideologies that result in gross human rights violations against those who do not wish to subscribe to

such ideologies or beliefs.

We also witness that many women in Asia continue to suffer multiple forms of discrimination due to the inter-sectionality of all forms of discrimination, including gender. Gender-based violence and human rights violations such as rape, sexual harassment and exploitation, trafficking, dowry death, '(dis)honour killings' and acid attacks continue to hound women in Asia. We would also like to draw your attention to the situation of migrant workers in Asia, who face new forms of slavery, such as withholding of passports, as tools for control and exploitation.

The state of human rights and security in Asia has deteriorated in the context of the on-going 'global war on terror'. Anti-terrorism measures often target individuals and groups on the basis of race, religion, and national origin, and xenophobic practices such as racial and religious profiling and the use of racist language contribute to a climate of fear and insecurity.

We are deeply concerned that no Asian governments have developed national plans of action on the DDPA, despite having committed under the DDPA to creating an environment conducive for the participation of civil society, creating national awareness of the DDPA, and convening regional follow-up meetings to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance (WCAR). Therefore, we urge all Asian governments to immediately develop national plans of action on the DDPA and thoroughly implement these plans.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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