

Interfaith International

Ecosoc accredited NGO, Geneva, Switzerland

Statement by Visuvalingam KIRUPAHARAN on behalf of 'Interfaith International' under item 9 -
Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance

6th session of the UN Human Rights Council – 25 September 2007

Mr President,

The Durban declaration and programme of actions is an eye opener for any society which is knowingly or unknowingly practicing racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

The reports of the Special Rapporteur on Racism (A/HRC/6/6) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/6/4) emphasise that ignorance and lack of respect for diversity can eventually result in ethnic and religious hatred.

The forms of religious discrimination – Islamophobia, Anti-semitism, Christianophobia, Buddhistophobia, Hinduphobia are types of religious-based discrimination. The economic social and cultural rights of the people are denied, violated and the people become marginalized on the grounds of protection of national identity.

The basic general principles of the UN General Assembly draft Resolution II – (A/RES/57/195- 4 December 2002) follow-up to the Durban Declaration, *calls upon States to take all necessary measures to combat racism in accordance with the commitments they have undertaken under the Durban Declaration and Programme of Actions.*

Paragraph one of the General Assembly resolution, acknowledges, that no derogation from the prohibition of racial discrimination, genocide, the crime of apartheid or slavery is permitted, as defined in the obligations under the relevant human rights instruments. Paragraph seven condemns the misuse of print, audio-visual and electronic media and new communications technologies to incite violence motivated by racial hatred. Furthermore, paragraph eight condemns political platforms and organizations based on racism, xenophobia or doctrines of racial superiority and related discrimination.

However, to the surprise of all, while this session has been in progress, – contrary to commitments undertaken in Durban, vast amounts of tax-payers' money have been wasted on print, CD and electronic media encouraging religious and ethnic disharmony, by a state which is failing in its responsibility.

Mr President,

During the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the great freedom fighter, Nelson Mandela once said, ***"You may succeed in delaying, but never in preventing the transition of South Africa to a democracy"***.

Let us consider war-torn Sri Lanka, where so many horrendous human rights violations are taking place, due to political problems caused by the racist policies and delaying tactics of successive governments since independence in 1948.

Systematic discriminatory legislation, implemented on citizenship, language, education, the judicial process and colonisation – and several communal riots against the Tamil people - have proved that racism and xenophobia exist in Sri Lanka. The forces which are composed of 99% Sinhalese are brutally committing atrocities against the innocent civilians - further proof of racism, which in fact has reached genocidal proportions, in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, Interfaith International urgently appeals to all participants of the 6th session of the Human Rights Council to take cognisance of these facts, and for all to respect their commitment to the Durban declaration and programme of actions.

Thank you.

Geneva, Switzerland