



*Présidence française de l'Union Européenne
French Presidency of the European Union*



63^{ème} ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

Troisième Commission
Point 62 - Elimination du racisme et de la discrimination
raciale

New York, le 3 novembre 2008
(Vérifier au prononcé)

Déclaration prononcée au nom de l'Union européenne

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63RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Third Committee
Item 62 – Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

New York, November 3rd, 2008
(Check upon delivery)

Statement on behalf of the European union delivered

- unofficial translation -

Mr. President,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, and Iceland, member of EFTA and the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Armenia align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union welcomes Mr. Githu Muigai, the new Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and wishes him every success in his job.

Racism and racial discrimination are problems facing every society around the globe, and events this year served as sobering reminders of this. In view of this global scourge, it is crucial that the international community remain united in order to combat the problem consensually.

Fighting all forms of racism is one of the European Union's priorities. Since 2001, we have stepped up our national and regional efforts. We have made significant progress and we can be satisfied with the best practices that have been established. This was made possible through the fulfilment of our international commitments regarding human rights, notably the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and through the Durban Declaration and its Programme of Action. However, we are also aware that challenges lie ahead and we reaffirm our determination to rise up to meet them.

The European Union recalls that racism and racial discrimination can come in a variety of forms and affirms that the United Nations must fight all manifestations of this phenomenon. The initiatives this body will take should not be restricted to a specific form of racism, but rather they should be based on a comprehensive assessment of this global blight in order to eliminate it in all its forms.

Mr. President,

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is the global cornerstone of the fight against racism. It is essential that it be fully implemented, and the European Union calls for all States to ratify this text as well as comply with the obligations that stem from it by adopting effective national measures to combat the causes and manifestations of racism and discrimination.

The European Union also calls for States Parties to respect their obligations by submitting their national report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the required date. In this respect, the European Union fully supports the Committee's work, which shows the relevancy and usefulness of the Convention to Fight Contemporary Manifestations of Racism.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Mr. President,

Seven years have passed since the Durban Conference, where following difficult negotiations, we were able to reach an agreement on a declaration and programme of action so that all countries could step up their fight against racism. Two years ago, the General Assembly made the decision to organize a follow-up conference to review the implementation of the Durban Declaration and its Programme of Action. The EU had agreed to vote for the resolution requesting that this conference be organized, on condition that the proceedings be held within the framework of the General Assembly and focus exclusively on the implementation of the declaration and the Durban Programme of Action, without any re-examination of these documents.

Subject to compliance with these elements, the European Union will do everything possible to preserve the spirit of consensus of Durban and to encourage the international community to adopt a balanced position at the close of the 2009 Review Conference.

The European Union will therefore play a full role in the Conference's preparation process. At the Preparatory committee for the review conference, it made a point of submitting a substantial contribution and actively involving itself in debates in a spirit of constructive cooperation.

At the end of this session of the Preparatory Committee, progress has finally been made as regards preparing a future final document for the Conference and a timetable for the work. However, the EU regrets that further substantive progress could not be made. We call on States to redouble their efforts to move discussion forward in order to obtain a balanced and operational text within the timetable which we set ourselves.

Mr. President,

Another sensitive subject is the possible development of complementary norms. The EU never opposed this eventuality as it stems from the consensus established in Durban. However, the EU has consistently maintained that this issue should only be treated once certain criteria were met. Firstly, the existing normative framework must be truly implemented and, if necessary, its interpretation must be developed in order to meet the current challenges. In addition, new norms should only be drawn up if they are proved to be necessary and are subject to a broad consensus, in that they aim to be universal. However, the most fundamental condition is that these norms must be aimed at increasing the scope of existing human rights and, conversely, they must not aim to go back on universal achievements by restricting the current scope of human rights.

The European Union is thus concerned to see that the thought process on the possible creation of complementary norms is moving in a direction which could reduce the level of human rights promotion and protection to which we have all been contributing for the past 60 years. The European Union will work in accordance with the principles which it set out and will not allow the United Nations' principles to be undermined.

Mr. President,

The EU is pinning its hopes on the continuation of the Durban Review Process, which must concentrate on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, without trying to restrict any human rights and without trying to establish any hierarchy among victims or exclude any one group. Neither should the process focus on specific geographical areas. The review conference should deal with the future, not the past, and should show how promoting human rights, especially the freedom of speech, can play an important role in fighting racism. As we have already indicated, the European Union would judge any attempt to restrict such rights as unacceptable. At the same time, we stress the fundamental role which education in human rights plays in fighting racism.

We must seek consensus and unity from the international community to fight all forms of racism around the world. Racism is a global problem, which should be a priority for each country. The European Union expresses the hope that the international community as a whole will be able to work constructively in order to move forward in the fight against racism and put an end to the suffering of its victims around the world.

Thank you very much./.