



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STAFFORD NEIL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, ON AGENDA ITEM 69 (A): ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, AND (B): COMPREHENSIVE FOLLOW-UP TO THE DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION, AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 7 November 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

It is my honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. on agenda items 69 (a) and (b) on the elimination of racism and racial discrimination and the comprehensive follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Over time, this Committee has facilitated discussions and seen the introduction and adoption of a number of resolutions, addressing various issues on human rights. While not intending to establish a hierarchy among them, it is our firm belief that the issue of racism and racial discrimination must of necessity assume a central place in such discussions.

The General Assembly has reiterated that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute to the development and well-being of their societies, and that any doctrine of racial superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous and must be rejected, together with theories that attempt to determine the existence of separate human races.

It is undeniable that in this twenty-first century, racism and racial discrimination remain prevalent, both overtly and covertly across societies. The elimination of these practices must remain a priority of the international community. The denial and violation of equal rights on the basis of race, runs counter to the very foundation upon which the United Nations is based and remains one of the most serious problems in human relations today.

Mr. Chairman,

The World Summit held in Durban, South Africa in 2001 was a significant milestone by the International Community to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in a comprehensive manner. The outcome of that Conference expressed the will and commitment of the International Community to establish a clear set of objectives and course of action to address them strategically, from all angles.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was the outcome of very intensive negotiations and the result was a carefully balanced document. No country and no Government was selectively targeted. What was targeted at Durban was racism and the action for its elimination and should be supported by all Governments.

Mr. Chairman,

It is now four years since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and it is of critical importance that we continue to closely monitor progress in the implementation of its decisions. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, as set out in document A/60/307. This report has provided useful information on the activities of the various organs of the UN and other stakeholders at the international, regional and national levels, which indicate that action against racism is being undertaken at those various levels.

It is encouraging for us to see that at the national level there has been institutional strengthening, for example through the introduction of national action plans by some governments and through social integration, as well as educational and cultural programmes towards promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural and racial diversity.

We are also pleased that Governments are beginning to react more often against cybercrime and the dissemination of racist ideologies through the internet, a concern that was mentioned in the Secretary-General's report of last year. We believe efforts must continue in this particular area, as advancing information technology allows increased use of the internet to encourage racial discrimination through the spread of racist ideologies. While we believe that freedom of speech remains a valuable component of democratic society, its exercise should not jeopardize the rights of others.

Racism and the fight against terrorism

Mr. Chairman,

We thank Mr. Doudou Diène the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, for his continued efforts in investigating forms of racism and in particular for his interim report contained in document A/60/283. The Special Rapporteur has drawn attention to some alarming signs of a retreat in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, on account of counter-terrorism policies and programmes that seem to encourage new forms of discrimination against ethnic groups, entire communities, and religious groupings, particularly against Muslims.

It is regrettable, that, according to the findings of the Special Rapporteur, the fight against terrorism, to which we are committed, has unfortunately created an opening for some political parties to adopt racist and xenophobic political platforms in their programmes, in order to win popularity under the guise of combating terrorism, defending the “national identity”, promoting “national preference” and even in combating illegal immigration.

Racism in sports

Mr. Chairman,

The role of sports as an important means for promoting social integration and friendly relations among people and between countries is well recognized. It is therefore regrettable that in sports there is continued frequency of racist and xenophobic incidents. The Special Rapporteur in his report to the Commission on Human Rights earlier this year, made some useful recommendations to combat this problem, including for international sports bodies to focus on the national dimension of the fight against racism, by asking national federations to submit annual reports on racist incidents and the action taken in response to them. This practical measure of accountability could prove effective in combating such deviant patterns. It is hoped that the recommendations will be pursued by all national sports authorities.

Legacies of the past

Mr. Chairman,

The General Assembly last week adopted a resolution honouring the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Paragraph 58 of our Durban document declared that the Holocaust must never be forgotten. Acts of genocide on that scale must constantly remind us of the danger of racism. This general approach should be broadened to acknowledge other historical instances of racist oppression which have left a legacy which has remained with us today. This is particularly so for people of African descent. In the year 2007 we will celebrate the 200 th anniversary of the ending of the slave trade in the British Empire which started the process leading to the ending of slavery. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on the fate of millions of Africans who endured the horrors of the middle passage and enslavement. It is our expectation that the United Nations will make appropriate arrangements for remembrance and recognition of those atrocities against Africans.

The persistence of racism and racial discrimination is related to past atrocities from conquest, colonialism, the Holocaust, slavery and other forms of forced servitude. The legacy of slavery in particular, is at the heart of situations of profound social and economic inequality which continue to affect people of African descent. It is important that the fight against racism should recognise the social and economic dimensions of the injustices of the past and seek to redress them appropriately.

Mr. Chairman,

The countries of the G77 and China are fully committed to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Platform for Action. We continue to support the work of the Inter-governmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the implementation of the outcomes of their recently concluded sessions.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, The G77 and China will again table a resolution on the global efforts towards the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We are looking forward to the full support of all members of the international community as a demonstration of the will of all of us to unite in working towards the full and complete elimination of a dangerous evil that has remained in our midst us for too long.

Thank you.

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