

**Eighth session of the Intergovernmental Working Group
on the Effective Implementation of the
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG)**



Opening Statement

by

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to open the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG).

I would like to congratulate Ambassador Doualeh for his stewardship of the Working Group during its seventh session and the tireless efforts he has made in the preparation of the present session to ensure its successful outcome.

Next year marks the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and two years since progress on the implementation of that important document was assessed at the Durban Review Conference. We have made strides in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. But we must not lower our guard, as much still remains to be done.

Many States have developed national action plans to combat racism as called for in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Such plans are instrumental in generating positive change through coordinated and systematic efforts on behalf of those who continue to suffer discrimination. Many other states, however, lag behind. Giving impulse to this positive change should be a priority for all members of the international community.

Let me underscore that efforts to implement all of the commitments contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action must be intensified for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During your last session you discussed the themes of protection of children, migration and employment. You also requested the Chairperson to prepare draft conclusions and recommendations on these issues in order to consider their adoption during the current session. I understand that in this regard your informal consultations were very productive.

I understand that the agenda of your eighth session also includes a discussion on good practices. Sometimes racial discrimination may seem an insuperable obstacle because it is attitudinal in nature and deep rooted in societal narratives. But prejudice can be stamped out. Through education, policy and legislation, discriminatory attitudes that might once have seemed normal can be exposed for the fallacy they embody. I look forward to learning of the successful initiatives that States have taken in this regard.

As I mentioned earlier, 2011 marks the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Your session also affords the opportunity to consider how this anniversary should be commemorated. It may be appropriate, for such an occasion, to include activities that are not merely celebratory in nature, but that also advance the anti-racism agenda. With the wealth of experience assembled in this room, I am certain that many effective and creative ideas will be proposed.

An interesting development in the organisation of your session this year is the introduction of a thematic discussion on structural discrimination. I note that this issue was debated at the last session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. The selection of this topic for your session reflects the commendable desire to harmonise the work of the two Working Groups. I congratulate you for this achievement.

Structural discrimination is difficult to identify because of its latent character and is often detectable only by its negative consequences. Rather than explicitly stated in legislation or policy, it may be reflected in illiteracy rates, infant mortality or unemployment levels that disproportionately affect various racial groups. For this reason, disaggregated data and other indicators are fundamental to identifying problems that are structural in a society and bring these forms of discrimination onto the surface. Here lies the real challenge. Courageous scrutiny is needed to identify those aspects of societal and institutional structures that perpetuate inequality.

You have much work ahead of you during the coming two weeks, and I wish you a very productive session. The fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is one that we can not afford to lose.

Thank you.