AIJAC applauds announcement that Australia will not attend controversial Durban 4 conference

May 6, 2021

Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council

<https://aijac.org.au/featured/aijac-applauds-announcement-that-australia-will-not-attend-controversial-durban-iv-conference/>

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) applauds Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s announcement that Australia will not participate in the event to mark the 20th anniversary of the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

AIJAC thanks Prime Minister Morrison for continuing Australia’s principled approach of boycotting the anniversary event, colloquially known as Durban 4, which looks set to continue a controversial tradition at the UN of singling out Israel alone, of all the world’s nations, for condemnation at anti-racism events.

Speaking at an Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce event in Melbourne on Thursday, PM Morrison said: “We will not associate Australia with one-sided and contentious language that singles out Israel or an event that champions such language.”

“This is entirely consistent with my Government’s very strong voting position on UN General Assembly resolutions, in the Human Rights Council and elsewhere. We will continue that same approach to Durban 4 later this year.”

Speaking at the same event, AIJAC National Chairman Mark Leibler praised the Prime Minister’s announcement.

“Here today, the Prime Minister has announced that Australia will not participate in Durban 4, another UN anti-Israel hate-fest,” Leibler said.

“Prime Minister, our response to this, in Hebrew, is kol hakavod, in English, all the honour to you and your Government. It is important for Israel to know that a country as well-respected internationally as Australia has its back.”

AIJAC Executive Director Dr Colin Rubenstein said: “At the original conference in the South African city of Durban in 2001, and then ahead of follow-up events in 2009 and 2011, Australia has consistently taken a stand against attempts by conference participants to single out Israel and slur the Jewish people.”

“Like the Howard Government in 2001, and the Gillard Government in 2009 and 2011, the Morrison Government has stood firm in opposition to the anti-Israel hate that is an unfortunate hallmark of these so-called anti-racism conferences.”

Dr Rubenstein added: “The Morrison Government has never wavered in its commitment to call out bias against Israel, which is all too prevalent in the United Nations.”

Australia becomes the second country to officially withdraw, after a US State Department spokesperson told media earlier this week that the US would not participate in Durban 4, which is scheduled to take place in September in New York.

Australia had already flagged concern with the anniversary event. In December, Australia voted against a UN General Assembly resolution calling for the 20th anniversary event to work toward the full and effective implementation of the problematic 2001 objectives.

Held in Durban, the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, colloquially known as Durban I, produced a conference declaration that criticised only Israel.

Jeremy Jones, AIJAC’s Director of International and of Community Affairs, was a member of the Australian delegation to the 2001 Durban Conference and documented the overt antisemitism at the parallel NGO conference.

The situation became so dire that Jewish participants had to be accompanied by additional security to ensure their personal safety at the conference.

Jones said “no genuine anti-racist would want anything to do with this tarnished Durban process”.

This event was a watershed in the long and dishonourable history of the UN being manipulated to discredit Israel, the world’s sole Jewish state.