

Durban Review Conference 20 – 24 April 2009

Statement by ICELAND

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Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland
Geneva 21 April 2009

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

I would like to start by conveying greetings from H.E. Mr. Össur Skarphéðinsson, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, who is unable to be with us today due to Parliamentary Elections which are taking place in Iceland later this week. The Minister wishes the conference every success in its deliberations.

Mr. President,

No **country** in the world has completely succeeded in fighting the phenomena of racial discrimination. It should therefore be with a sense of determination as well as humility, that we all intensify our efforts to eradicate racism from our societies.

We need to work towards universal adherence and full implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (**CERD**). Our objective should be to re-invigorate our efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation of the wide ranging commitments made in Durban in 2001 so as to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The **prime responsibility** lies with states. Governments must take the lead in combating impunity for acts of racism and related intolerance, and in ensuring expeditious access to justice and fair and adequate redress for victims. Combating racial discrimination in all its aspects should be a priority for the international community, along with the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding.

Mr. President,

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance affect **women and men** in different ways – it is therefore extremely important that all policies to combat racism and racial discrimination take **gender perspectives into account**.

In our struggle to eradicate racism we should also highlight and support its opposite. Tolerance, understanding and human dignity stand in strong contrast to the ignorance that underlies racism. We should work to instill values of tolerance through education and awareness-raising.

All States should enhance mutual understanding among various cultures and civilizations, and implement adequate cultural and educational programmes aimed at countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It is important to speak out against all of these scourges, as it is only by speaking out that one can prevent racism from taking root. For this to be possible it is crucial to ensure **freedom of opinion and expression**.

Mr. President,

The Icelandic Delegation has participated fully in the preparation of this review conference and we have been determined to sit throughout, convinced that it is not in the best interests of our common struggle against racism to abandon this forum to a few extremists. In our deliberations here – governments and other stakeholders must remain above mutual recrimination and political point scoring. The focus is and should remain on eliminating racism and racial discrimination and reaching out to the many victims of racism around the world.

Iceland welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the conference. Iceland regrets that the course of discussions led to the decision by a few states not to attend the Durban Review Conference.

Let us think about all those who have suffered throughout the centuries and are still suffering, solely due to the colour of their skin. Let us think about all those who have or are still making sacrifices, sometimes with their lives, in the struggle against racism. It is our obligation to make sure that their suffering and their struggle is not in vain.

Let us be guided by the spirit demonstrated by the two great heroes of the struggle against racism – ex-President Nelson Mandela and Dr. Martin Luther King.

Thank you, Mr. President