



PORTUGAL 2007

**Preparatory Committee  
of the Durban Review Conference  
Organizational session  
27-31 August 2007**

**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Francisco Xavier Esteves  
Permanent Representative of Portugal**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**OPENING STATEMENT**

**Geneva, 27 August 2007**

*Check against delivery*

**Durban PrepCom Organization Session (27-31.8.2007)**

**EU Opening Statement**

Madam President,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to start by congratulating you for your election to preside over the work of the Preparatory Committee of the Review Conference on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. I wish you the best of success. Your success will be the success of us all in organizing a meaningful Review Conference that can contribute to a more thorough and better implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and, through such a result, help us all in combating the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Madam President,

All who participated at the Durban World Conference, almost 6 years ago, recall that it was an arduous task to reach agreement on the 380 paragraphs that constitute the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It was a major achievement and the European Union and its Member States are among those who actively participated in the negotiations and agreed on the text. We attach the highest importance to combating racism in our societies and we have thus focused our efforts on the full implementation of the agreed Declaration and Programme of Action.

We welcome the opportunity that the Review Conference will give us to share with our partners what the European Union has done to implement the Durban DPA, to exchange views on our achievements and the main challenges we still face in the framework of the implementation, and to learn from the experiences of our partners from other regions. We hope we will have an occasion, even during this organizational session, to already present some of our initiatives and experiences.

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

Madam President,

It was with this spirit of constructiveness that the European Union negotiated with the G77 and other delegations GA resolution 61/149, which decided to convene for 2009 the Review Conference on the implementation of the Durban DPA. On the basis of OP33 of this resolution and the views exchanged during the negotiations, it was the EU's clear understanding that:

- The review will focus on the implementation of the Durban DPA and will not involve any kind of reopening of what was then agreed;
- The Review Conference will be conducted at a high-level meeting in the framework of the General Assembly; and, finally
- The preparatory work to be conducted by the Human Rights Council would not entail the creation of new mechanisms in Geneva – taking into account the already heavy workload in the Council for Member States and the UN Secretariat –, and, thus, the Council should use for this end its existing mechanisms, particularly the Inter-Governmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban DPA.

This understanding allowed the EU to vote in favour of the resolution in question and, hence, to commit itself to the realization and the success of the Review Conference.

It was therefore with deep regret that we saw the presentation, just a few days later, of a draft resolution in the Human Rights Council that contradicted the spirit of what had been agreed at the GA and forced the EU to vote against what would become resolution HRC/3/2.

The reason for this regret is that we believe that the Review Conference can only be successful if it is based on the broadest possible consensus. In fact, the major added value of the Durban DPA is its universality. Many of us have measures at national level to combat racism. Most of our regions have regional plans and institutions that combat racism. What Durban achieved was a truly international Plan of Action. For its follow-up to be successful the broad consensus achieved in Durban and the broad consensus achieved around GA resolution 61/149 has to be maintained. We appeal, therefore, to all delegations and groups to work hard to reach consensus at all stages of the preparatory work of the Review Conference, including on the draft decisions we will take at this Organizational Session. Let us not give up at the first obstacles that we might face and let us all continue negotiating in an open and constructive way until we reach consensus and ensure that this Review Conference will be an event that unites us all instead of dividing us. Combating the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is too important for us to allow it to be enfeebled by excessive politicisation.

On its part, the European Union will do its best to reach meaningful and consensual results. We are committed to the success of the Review Conference on the implementation of the Durban DPA. We will present concrete ideas and suggestions to that end during this session, namely on item 5 of the agenda. We look forward to an open, transparent and frank discussion with all stakeholders on these and all other ideas during the next days.

Thank you, Madam President

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