



European Union

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

16th Session

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Item 9

General Debate

Statement by

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to the United Nations Office in Geneva**

on behalf of the European Union

Geneva, 22 March 2011

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Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro*¹ and Iceland**², the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

10 years have passed since the Durban Conference and the need to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance remains as strong as ever. No part of the world is immune from racism. What is important is to show a genuine commitment to combat racism by acknowledging problems and by fully and effectively enforcing the existing instruments to address such problems. At the very end of the 1990's the European Union was equipped with Treaty provisions, which would enable the European Union to adopt legislation aimed at combating all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin. The very first piece of legislation was designed to combat discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin at the workplace, as well as in the provisions of and access to goods and services. The political commitment was such that it took less than 6 months for that piece of EU legislation to be adopted in 2000, quite a feat for an organization renowned for its lengthy procedures. By the end of 2000, another solid piece of legislation addressing other forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on age, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation at the workplace was adopted. This means that by the time the Durban Conference started in August 2001, the European Union had already started to address the issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in a comprehensive manner and with total commitment.

The EU also wishes to state again that the importance of addressing multiple discrimination stems from the observation that mechanisms that discriminate and exclude individuals are the same, regardless the ground of discrimination and based mostly on stereotyping. Moreover, individuals are often discriminated against on cumulative grounds, the most common combination being gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic or racial origin.

The EU also wishes to underline the importance of awareness-raising, including to promote diversity at the work place, as experience has showed that legislation itself is not sufficient.

On the issue of the follow-up to the Durban Conference, we would like to praise the Chair of the InterGovernmental Working Group, Ambassador Siad Doualeh for his excellent chairmanship and for his ability to create a very constructive atmosphere conducive to fruitful discussions. As regards

¹ *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

² **Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

the Ad Hoc Committee on complementary standards, last year in a spirit of compromise, the EU agreed to the resumption of the 3rd session to April on the understanding that as the first week had been lost the resumed session would only last one week. Now we have been informed that the session would last 2 weeks and it will be conducted partly without interpreting. The EU is adamant that the resumed session should only last one week and be conducted with interpretation services, as provided for by UN rules. Moreover, for the session to be meaningful at all, it is essential that a permanent, Geneva-based chair is appointed as soon as possible so that he or she can start work on a programme of work.

In conclusion, the EU will remain focused on its combat against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

I thank you for your attention.