

**Draft Statement for kind use of Hon'ble Foreign Minister during the High-level meeting  
of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the  
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action  
22 September 2011, New York**

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to thank you and the Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon for arranging this high level meeting on the theme '**Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: recognition, justice and development**'. I am confident that under your able leadership, this high level meeting will achieve its objectives.

Mr. Chairman,

We have always regarded racism and racial discrimination as the anti-thesis of everything humanity stands for. It is a negation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Durban Declaration and Plan of Action remains a milestone in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Declaration reaffirmed that every human being has the right to a life of honour and dignity, and that nobody should be subjected to insult or offence because of his or her race, colour, religion, nationality or origin. The Plan of Action provided for a comprehensive set of steps to eliminate acts of racism and xenophobia.

The Durban Review conference in 2009 allowed us the opportunity to assess its implementation, including contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. The Durban review outcome reaffirmed that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence should be prohibited by law. It also reaffirmed that all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts should be declared punishable offence by law, in accordance with the international obligations of States, and that these prohibitions are consistent with freedom of opinion and expression.

There has been some progress in the fight against racism. A number of countries have undertaken measures to implement the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action. This has not, however, been proved enough. Despite the positive outcomes of these Conferences, and the initiatives taken by many countries in various parts of the world, real progress in the fight against the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances is now faced with daunting challenges and new trends of racism. In some parts of the world, there is a tendency to resist multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and diversified society. Such exercise is one of the root causes of the resurgence of racism and xenophobia. A systematic campaign of incitement to racist and religious hatred has become evident. Notions of racial, cultural, religious and ethnic superiority have increased. Theories of racial superiority continue to be propagated and practiced. Certain religions have been stereotyped in those societies

exposing followers to hatred and possible discrimination. For example, the religion of Islam is stigmatized and defamed undermining the rights and dignity of its followers. Sadly, media is being used to incite prejudice and discrimination. The internet is being misappropriated to spread racial hatred.

We are, therefore, witnessing a rise in extreme political platforms in various part of the world. Some of the most liberal and pluralistic societies are even demonstrating racist tendencies through propaganda against immigrants as well as promoting cultural notion of supremacy. Migrants are faced with multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, origin and ethnicity. Such discrimination on multiple forms affects enjoyment of their basic human rights including social, economic and cultural rights. Sometimes authorities remain apathetic to discrimination in wages, housing, and education, or to incidents of violence against migrants. Such acts deny the basic human rights and dignity of the victims of racial discrimination. It denies their rights to freely practice and preserve their religious and cultural identity. This prevents effective integration of migrants and ethnic minorities.

We are concerned at the increase of these contemporary manifestations of these scourges. Mis-use of freedom of expression as well as mis-conception about multiculturalism has resulted in the rise of these extreme political platforms. It is the primary responsibility of state to curb these platforms, and to encourage multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural secular values. Effective legislation is needed at the national and international levels to curb these tendencies and to ensure relief to the victims.

Mr. Chairman,

At the national level, legislation must be adopted and implemented to stem racist ideologies and practices and prevent advocacy of hatred and intolerance. The sense of impunity for racist crimes must be eliminated through effective and timely prosecution. Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential elements of democratic and tolerant society. We must promote freedom to the maximum limit permissible under article 20 of ICCPR [*Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.*] Freedom of expression must not be abused for propagation of racist prejudice or religious intolerance.

Mr. Chairman,

The Constitution of Bangladesh expressly forbids discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste or creed, gender or place of birth as enshrined in article 28 (1). It guarantees equality before law, and equality of opportunity for all citizens. It safeguards the legitimate rights and interests of minorities and provides affirmative action programmes for the disadvantaged groups. In accordance with our principled position, we reject and denounce racism and racist practices, wherever, whenever and in what so ever form perpetrated. Our independent judiciary, an ever-vigilant media and an active civil society have strengthened the government's efforts for attaining equality and non-discrimination. We are committed to combating and eliminating discrimination in all its manifestations. We are determined to

counter the forces that seek to destroy the values of democracy, pluralism, tolerance and diversity. My Government, has enacted a new law entitled 'Cultural Institutions of Ethnic Minority Act 2010' in order to protect, develop, flourish as well as research on the cultural heritages of ethnic minorities living in Bangladesh.

Internationally, we have supported the fight against racist practices and racial intolerance. It is our Constitutional commitment to support oppressed peoples throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism or racism. It is no wonder that Bangladesh stood for President Nelson Mandela for his life-long struggle against the then apartheid regime in South Africa. It is no wonder that we are unequivocal in our rejection of policies and practices of the occupying power in the Middle East. Based on this principled position, we have lent support to the persecuted communities in their defense of legitimate rights.

Mr. Chairman, the people of Palestine, like elsewhere, are entitled to pursue their life in conditions of freedom, safety and dignity. We believe that the recognition of Palestine is a positive step forward. The people in the Occupied Palestinian territories have been suffering from multiple forms of discrimination for decades after decades. We stand by the Palestinian people's cause, and demand that the worst victims of racism in the human history get adequate redress in order to establish their legitimate rights.

Mr. Chairman,

We need to fight against racism in two fronts - political and legal. Effective implementation of Durban Declaration and Plan of Action lies upon political acceptability and commitment of the member states. The governments must demonstrate its political will to fight against racism and xenophobia in all forms. The international community should promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and multi-culturalism.

On legal front, we need to ensure effective legislation both at the national and at the international levels to curb the tendencies of perpetrating crimes and discrimination based on doctrine of racial, religious, ethnic and cultural superiority.

It is the primary duty of state to ensure the rights of migrants as well as its citizens. It is also the duty of the state to protect migrants and its citizens from racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The governments should ensure relief to victims of racism by laying legal and administrative mechanisms in line with the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action. Governments should also promote the role of human rights education in promoting tolerance and respect to cultural diversity in order to preventing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

In addition, the international community must study carefully possible normative gaps existing in the international legal framework and adopt separate instruments, if required, in dealing with the contemporary forms of racism and related intolerances. There is a need to clearly draw lines between the legal contours between the freedom of expression and incitement to racial hatred.

In our fight against racism, civil society and media can play a role of effective partners. Media needs to be more respectful and responsible and avoid conducting programmes that foment hatred and intolerance in the name of intellectual discourse. Media rather should promote tolerance and secular ideas based on mutual respect, diversity of race, cultures, religion, color, and ethnicity.

Mr. Chairman,

I believe that we can work collectively to learn from best practices, and formulate strategies on confronting these new challenges. This can only be achieved if we, the members of the United Nations, demonstrate the necessary political will to fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. I call upon all to rededicate ourselves to the full implementation of Durban Declaration and Plan of Action. Let us ignore divisive forces, and demonstrate that we can create a world where the promises of 'dignity and justice for all' are kept, and in reality promoted.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.