**Ros-Lehtinen Calls on U.S. to Oppose, Stay Away from ‘Durban III’**

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U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs

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U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, commented on the United Nations General Assembly’s Third Committee’s passage of a resolution this evening authorizing the UN to hold a high-level meeting at its New York headquarters in September of 2011 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism (Durban I). The U.S., Israel, Canada, the United Kingdom, and 15 other Member States voted against and 35 abstained. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

“Durban I and Durban II were intended to fight bigotry, but were instead hijacked by extremists who turned them into anti-Western and anti-Semitic hate fests.

“The U.S. was right to walk out of Durban I and to not participate in Durban II, precisely because we sought to avoid legitimizing such intolerance. We should announce publicly, right now, that we will stay away from Durban III, deny it U.S. taxpayer dollars, and oppose all measures that seek to facilitate it. And we should encourage other responsible nations to do the same.”

BACKGROUND: On December 18, 2009, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution calling for a “one-day plenary event to commemorate the ten-year anniversary [of Durban I] during the high-level segment of the General Assembly to be devoted to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance during its sixty-fifth session, in 2011”. The U.S., joined by Israel, Canada, and ten other nations, voted against this resolution. Today, the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee passed a resolution authorizing such a commemoration to consist of a one-day UN General Assembly meeting to be held in New York in September of 2011, at the head of state/head of government level. The General Assembly, in plenary session, will consider the resolution in the near future. The United States and Israeli delegations withdrew from Durban I because it was undermined by hateful, anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric and political agendas. The official government declaration adopted by Durban I, the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, singled out Israel for criticism and implicitly accused Israel of racism toward the Palestinians. The Durban Review Conference (Durban II) was likewise hijacked, with Libya chairing its main committee and Libya, Iran, and Cuba serving as vice presidents of the conference itself. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad exploited the conference’s podium to call for Israel’s destruction and propagate anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

NOTE: Ros-Lehtinen has authored several pieces of legislation opposing U.S. participation in or support for the Durban process, including H.Res. 879 in the last Congress and H.Res. 42 and H.R. 3231 (the Durban Taxpayer Refund Act) in the present Congress.