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| ***Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees, Acting U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, on the Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination, in the Third Committee of the General Assembly, November 28, 2007*** | |
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| Mr. Chairman,  The United States is opposed to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.  Our record of domestic legislation and policies to combat vigorously such activities and attitudes demonstrates our commitment.  The United States has long been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).  Although we supported the stated objectives of the World Conference held in Durban in 2001 – and we continue to support these objectives – the outcomes of the conference were deeply flawed and divisive.  The resolution now before us endorses that flawed outcome and is therefore itself seriously problematic.  We believe that Durban follow-up activities are duplicative of the work done by the CERD committee, as well as of the Human Rights Committee for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of the work related to the ILO conventions that address workers rights.  In a time of limited resources and many great needs, we do not support the continuation of such duplicative work.  For these reasons, and as we have stated before, we do not believe the Human Rights Council should act as a preparatory committee for the Durban Review Conference.  Rather, that body should dedicate itself to the role for which it was created: addressing human rights situations around the world, particularly emerging situations.  Similarly, we strongly believe that – with so many pressing issues before us – the Secretary General should not be asked to fund regional preparatory meetings that duplicate work already underway.  We also believe that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should provide more substantial programming and cooperative assistance in countries around the world to combat the scourge of racism, rather than put its valuable resources toward more conferences.  Each country must have a legal framework in place to protect individuals from discrimination and to preserve other individual rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of religion.  At this time States should be focusing on implementation of existing commitments, rather than on the follow-up of a flawed instrument or the creation of new instruments. The essential elements in multilateral efforts to combat contemporary forms of racism are universal ratification and effective implementation of the existing Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.  For these reasons, the United States will vote against the resolution.  Thank you, Mr. Chairman. | |