

**Human Rights Council, High Level Session – General Segment,
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Statement by Fatima Doubakil, member Executive Committee, Young Women from Minorities

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen

My name is Fatima Doubakil. I am a European minority women and a Swedish citizen. I have the honour to address you in my personal capacity as representative of civil society. I was invited by a group of NGOs active in the work against racism to address this general segment.

We are meeting at a moment when less than two months remain until the important Durban Review Conference to be held at Geneva in April. It is thus critical for us to address the issues of racism and discrimination in the light of implementation of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action which is the agreed cornerstone of the United Nations efforts against racism.

The World Conference Against Racism in 2001 and the NGO and Peoples mobilization that preceded it played a significant role in focusing attention on the core issues of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in today's world. It became a great meeting point for Civil Society organizing and accelerated the efforts of many victims groups. The Durban Conference was indeed a meeting of historic significance for the many marginalized victims groups of this world.

For the first time the Durban document gave a clear recognition of the historical roots of racism in the transatlantic slave trade and the colonial past. It provided an understanding of the emergence of the present day world marked by great gaps between those with privileges and those without. It also called for remedies to restore the dignity of the victims of past injustices which legacies are present in our societies of today. While the Durban agreements were an important step towards the recognition of the past crimes, to our deep regret little has been done to address its devastating effects and legacies of today.

Unfortunately we can not proclaim that the struggle against racism to be over. On the contrary the danger of racism and xenophobia is growing in all regions of the world. For us as young women from minorities we can still witness how something so primitive as color still predetermines minorities lives in Europe.

How can we forget the aftermath of September 11 2001. We have learned that the measures taken by states after September 11 in their effort to fight terrorism did not meet the terms of international human rights. We also witness the growing islamophobia which have reached new and alarming level around the world.

I have drawn your attention to some of the situations which are of great concern to the large groups of young women from minorities that I represent.

In this context we are deeply troubled and concerned over the ongoing disinformation campaign that is taking place with the purpose to undermine the Durban Review Conference. **We must not forget nor ignore that the final document of the World Conference Against Racism was adopted by consensus with the overwhelming participation of UN member states and that the same countries have reaffirmed its continued legitimacy today.**

So my questions today are: why are preparations for the Review Conference at such a low level? And where are the means for Civil Society to participate at the Review Conference in the same way as is the custom with all other UN conferences?

I appeal to all of you here today and in particular the governments and the UN secretariat to fully support the Durban review conference and to insure the success of the conference, by doing so we recognizes the reality of millions of people and who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and we empower them in their struggle against racism.