

**UNITED NATIONS  
DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE  
(20 - 24 April 2009)**

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**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Hans DAHLGREN  
Permanent Representative of Sweden to  
the United Nations Office in Geneva  
on behalf of the European Union**

**General Segment**

**Geneva, 22 April 2009**

*Check against delivery*

**Durban Review Conference  
(Geneva, 20 – 24 April 2009)**

**EU Statement – General Segment**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of all Member States of the European Union, regardless of their participation in the Conference.

First, let me firmly reject and deplore the offensive and utterly unacceptable statement delivered during the High Level Segment by the President of Iran. His hate-filled allegations are rejected in the strongest possible terms by the entire EU. It clearly ran counter the scope and objectives of the Conference, and in fact misused it to promote intolerance and even hatred and violated the dignity of the United Nations.

Throughout the world we are reminded on a daily basis of the need to combat racism and intolerance. Today, many individuals and groups of individuals continue to be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent, nationality or ethnic origin. In addition, victims often suffer multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination, based on gender, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, sexual orientation, or other status. In this respect, we regret that individuals around the world are still facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation, in some countries even the death penalty is imposed.

This not only prevents the full enjoyment of human rights, but also represents a threat to democratic societies and their fundamental values. Therefore, they remain to be incompatible with the principles on which the European Union is founded, namely freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the rule of law. At the same time, we are convinced that racism and related phenomena can and have to be fought while respecting other human rights and fundamental freedoms, notably the freedom of expression. By allowing free debate and exchanges of ideas, and by disseminating information on human rights abuses and calling for accountability, independent media, press, tv, internet and new media, the freedom of expression plays an important role in the fight against racism and intolerance. While incitement to violence or hatred, targeting individuals or groups of individuals can never be tolerated, we consider freedom of expression an essential foundation for any tolerant, democratic society.

Respect for equality in diversity is a central premise of European integration. There have been significant advancements made in combating racism at both normative and policy level. Progress in some areas has been remarkably fast, highlighting the EU institutions' determination to act and the strong political consensus on this issue amongst the national governments.

The European Union is convinced of the importance of reinforcing co-operation at the regional and international level in the fight against racism and discrimination. It is therefore essential to continue to support the work performed by the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in addition to the work performed at a global level by the United Nations.

The Council of Europe plays an important role in the fight against racism and related discrimination. Its judicial system, the European Court of Human Rights, provides effective protection for human rights, which include the fundamental principle of non-discrimination. The EU also appreciates the work carried out by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Council of Europe's principal body in combating racism and intolerance. Through its country reports, ECRI monitors and analyses progress made towards combating violence, discrimination and racial prejudice in each of the member states of the Council of Europe and presents proposals to governments for addressing the problems identified.

We are also actively involved in the efforts of the OSCE to prevent violent conflicts by promoting inter-ethnic relations and tolerance. The human dimension of the OSCE, which covers all the rules and activities relating to human rights and democracy, represents one of the three dimensions of security as conceived by that organisation. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities as well as the comprehensive field activities of the OSCE play important roles in the fight against discrimination, especially discrimination based on ethnicity.

Racism and xenophobia must not go unchecked, regardless of where they occur, who their victims are or who is responsible for them. The fight against discrimination should be seen as part of the global struggle for human rights. International co-operation, in close cooperation with the civil society, in this fight is essential. Not only because it confirms our belief that we are all working together for a just cause, but because we can learn from each other's experience and strengthen our own efforts.

Thank you.

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