

## **Durban Review Conference**

### **Statement by Mr. Githu Muigai UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**

23 April 2009

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me start by emphasizing how pleased and honoured I am to attend the Durban Review Conference. It has been a great pleasure to be able to closely follow the evolution of this process since the beginning of my mandate as Special Rapporteur last year. The preparatory process for this Conference has been a long journey, but it has certainly contributed to the drafting of a robust text which will hopefully be adopted by consensus. I would like to commend all those Member States who have been involved in the negotiations for their cooperative spirit and for the sometimes very hard concessions they have been able to make.

Eight years ago in Durban, the international community created an ambitious and groundbreaking framework to fight all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The DDPA identified like never before the key international, regional and national strategies that need to be implemented in this struggle against racism. As such, it focused not only on correcting historical wrongs, but also on addressing current injustices. This framework set up by the DDPA has affected in a lasting and positive way the work of international human rights mechanisms, including the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on racism, and has provided us with a robust blueprint for carrying out our work.

The Review Conference comes at a timely juncture, at a moment when it is clear that we have failed to fully implement the DDPA. Racism is well alive all around the world and will only be eradicated by long-term concerted efforts by the international community, as well as by specific national strategies by all States. No informed observer can deny this fact. In this regard, the starting point in our discussions should be a frank recognition that we have not succeeded in making the DDPA fully effective. Of course, the progress we have achieved so far should not be underestimated. However, we still have a long journey ahead of us if we are to make the DDPA a reality for those who suffer the consequences of racism on a daily basis.

In this regard, I believe that the Review Conference should not be approached as the culmination of the Durban process, but rather as the beginning of a new era of international mobilization in the fight against all forms of racism. The key message this Conference sends out to the world should be that racism is a global problem which therefore requires global solutions. Member States, international organizations and civil society alike should heed this call and step forward to fulfil their obligations. Of course, primary responsibility for the implementation of the DDPA continues to lie with Governments, who should design and implement a number of legislative and policy measures to fight racism, including the design of national action plans. However, civil society actors, including communities that are vulnerable to racism,

also have a central responsibility to play, not only by holding Governments accountable but also advising policymaking and participating in policy implementation.

Excellencies,

As the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner stated, I urge all States to see the Durban Review Conference as the beginning rather than the culmination of the international mobilization against racism. By showing their commitment to the international anti-racism movement, Member States are also sending an important signal to their relevant domestic constituencies: that racism is unacceptable and will be vigorously combated by the different institutions of the State within all possible parameters of the law.

Engaging in the Durban Review process also means leaving political agendas outside this room. Ideological divides can only make us lose sight of the real and concrete problem of racism and those who suffer from it.

A renewed international engagement against racism is as urgent as it has ever been. As we face a multitude of crises that will dearly affect our standards of living, the risks of renewed racism and xenophobia are too evident for us to ignore. This is why I would like to once again call upon all members of the international community, in particular those who chose not to participate in the Durban Review Conference, to re-engage internationally on the common cause of eradicating racism. I particularly call on the United States and President Obama to provide leadership in this process, building on its historical experience of combating racism.

Let us continue to express our unrelenting political will to fight all manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Thank you