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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 21 March 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia)

later: Mr. ESCUDERO MARTINEZ (Ecuador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

- (a) COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION (agenda item 6) (continued) (E/CN.4/2005/15, 16, 17, 18 and Corr.1, Add.1 and Corr.1, Add.2, Add.3, Add.4 and Add.6; E/CN.4/2005/19 and 20; E/CN.4/2005/NGO/26, 56, 66, 102, 137, 149, 176, 212, 239, 261, 280 and 315)

1. The CHAIRPERSON said that 21 March was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As part of the activities of the Day, a panel discussion would be held on “Discrimination and hate crimes: countering the violence of intolerance”. Racial discrimination remained one of the most difficult challenges to be faced, and he called on the members of the Commission to reaffirm the importance of eliminating it.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

2. Mr. DIÈNE (Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance) said that the reports submitted under agenda item 6 focused on the following questions: (a) the resurgence of phenomena and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia; (b) the central role of identity constructions in and the impact of multiculturalism on the resilience of racism, discrimination and xenophobia; and (c) the dynamics of the clash of cultures behind that resurgence.

3. The reports attempted to identify the underlying causes of those phenomena as well as their manifestations; they recommended guidelines for action, notably recognition of the seriousness of the resurgence, and the taking into account of the cultural uniqueness and historical background of each phenomenon and the universality of the struggle.

4. With regard to the resurgence of manifestations of racism, the data collected by the Special Rapporteur pointed to four underlying causes. Firstly, there was the trivialization of racist and xenophobic utterances, which stemmed from the growing influence of extreme right-wing movements and parties on the political programmes of mainstream parties. The protection of “the threatened national identity”, the defence of national preference and the fight against “illegal immigration” had become electorally profitable issues. The victims of discrimination were non-nationals, nationals of other ethnic, cultural or religious groups, immigrants and refugees.

5. The second cause of the resurgence of racism was the activism of racist organizations, such as neo-Nazi groups (in Europe, in the Russian Federation and in the Baltic countries) and groups which preached racial superiority (United States) or ethnic superiority (Africa and Asia). Common to those groups was the fact that they followed up their words with deeds and resorted to physical violence.

6. Third cause: the upsurge in anti-Semitism, Christianophobia and Islamophobia. The resurgence of anti-Semitism appeared to be related to two factors: the impact of the Middle East conflict and the persistence of classic anti-Semitism. The increase in Islamophobia, notably in Europe, and above all after the events of September 2001, had to do with the fact that Islam was associated with terrorism, and its followers were under permanent suspicion of being dangerous. Christianophobia, long neglected, now constituted a serious threat to practising Christians in a number of countries. All three religions also suffered from the exacerbation of dogmatic secularism.

7. The fourth manifestation of the general growth of racism and xenophobia was the resurgence of racism in sports. The nationalist dimension of sporting contests had greatly eroded the ideals of competition and respect. The increase in violence and overtly racist manifestations, notably at soccer matches, was illustrated by the behaviour of neo-Nazi groups and by the statements of certain trainers, especially in Spain. As Special Rapporteur he had taken the matter up with the leaders of international sports organizations and had noted a determination to combat that scourge. An initiative was under way, in conjunction with the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), to organize a major awareness programme in connection with the next Soccer World Cup, in 2006.

8. The fact of the matter was that, despite three world conferences, an international convention and the remarkable work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), racism had not lost any of its virulence, identity constructions playing a central role in its entrenchment and growth. Nervousness about identity, with its corollary the rejection of diversity, was the common denominator of the most violent manifestations of racism and discrimination and the ideological stock-in-trade of racist and xenophobic political parties and movements.

9. A number of recent tragedies testified to that fact. In Côte d'Ivoire, the concept of "ivoirité", or Ivorianness, and its political instrumentalization had set off a bloody xenophobic upsurge in a country with no xenophobic tradition. Any lasting political solution to the political crisis in that country must include a programme of intercultural and inter-ethnic dialogue and the promotion of egalitarian multiculturalism. In Europe, the serious incidents which had taken place in the Netherlands following the murder of Theo van Gogh, the appeal to a European identity incompatible with the Muslim religion as a central argument for refusing Turkey's admission to the European Union, and the anti-Islamic tone of the debate on the prohibition of religious symbols in public schools testified to a rejection of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity which generated discrimination and xenophobia. The construction of a European Union identity was a question that should be given priority attention if the fight against racism was to be credible. The rejection of multiculturalism in Europe had been highlighted by a survey on attitudes towards migrants and minorities conducted by the EUMC.

10. In Central America, indigenous populations and persons of African descent in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua continued to be the victims of racism and racial discrimination, the direct consequence of a historical heritage that had moulded society in those countries and legitimized the emergence of discrimination-based identities. Such discrimination took the form of political, economic and social marginalization of certain groups, failure to respect their cultural and linguistic rights, land theft and police violence.

11. In addition to an official acknowledgement of the reality of racism and discrimination, the Special Rapporteur recommended that each of the countries visited should elaborate, in a democratic and participatory manner, national programmes and a regional programme against racism based on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

12. In closing, he drew the Commission's attention to the emergence of a dynamics of culture clash which amplified manifestations of racism and discrimination in the context of the fight against terrorism. The most tangible sign of that development was the rhetoric of politicians and certain media which, as in the Netherlands, Côte d'Ivoire, and recently Thailand, blamed an entire group for the acts of individuals, thereby provoking inter-communal conflict.

13. In the final analysis, he believed that the gravity of racist phenomena probably constituted the most serious threat to the progress of democracy. He stressed that the effectiveness of the fight against racism and discrimination depended on the reliability of the available data on all manifestations of discrimination, and he drew attention to his recommendation that a structure should be set up within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to collect such data.

14. Mr. LOPEZ (Guatemala) said that his Government had welcomed with satisfaction the report by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Doudou Diène, who had visited Guatemala in 2004. In that country, racism and racial discrimination were reflected in attitudes of contempt and rejection towards the various indigenous communities. To overcome that situation, Guatemala had taken the following initiatives: setting up of the Presidential Commission against discrimination and racism; awarding of the operating rights of television channel 5 to an indigenous body; establishment within the Ministry of Education of a secretariat of intercultural bilingual education; characterization of the offence of discrimination; passage of the law on national languages, requiring civil servants to provide services in the language of each community; and passage of the law on the promotion of education against discrimination.

15. Guatemala welcomed the Special Rapporteur's recommendations. The Presidential Commission against racism and racial discrimination was already working on their implementation through a campaign to heighten public awareness of the country's cultural wealth and to alert civil servants to the problems of discrimination facing some sectors of the population. In accordance with one of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, on 29 March the Vice-President would submit a draft plan for the elimination of racism and racial discrimination in Guatemala. A public debate was currently taking place on the discrimination which had directly targeted the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Ms. Rigoberta Menchú Tum.

16. Guatemala and its Government faced difficult tasks. They must increase the budget of institutions responsible for combating racism and racial discrimination, strengthen the rule of law, accept the right of indigenous populations to participate in political life, particularly the electoral process, eliminate social inequalities, and combat the poverty which disproportionately affected those populations.

17. In closing, he invited the Special Rapporteur to visit Guatemala again to assess progress made in implementing his recommendations. Despite a difficult historical and economic context, Guatemala was determined to ensure that the various communities making up the Guatemalan nation shared power on an equal footing.

18. Mr. ZAPATAS (Honduras) thanked the Special Rapporteur for the interest he had shown in Honduras and for his report. He could rest assured that his recommendations on the social integration of indigenous populations and people of African descent would be taken fully into account. In Honduras, racial discrimination was not State policy. The problems that existed in that area were primarily due to lack of resources, which prevented the full integration of all in society. Honduran legislation, and in particular the Constitution, guaranteed all public rights and freedoms for everyone.

19. Initiatives had already been taken, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, to meet the needs of the indigenous population and people of African descent. In the legislative sphere, all forms of discrimination had been made subject to criminal sanctions; at the institutional level, a national commission against racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance had been established. A programme of assistance to indigenous populations and populations of African descent had been launched to improve the vulnerable situation of those populations in all areas, notably their economic plight. The Honduran Government was concerned about the prevalence among them of communicable diseases such as AIDS.

20. The Government was also worried about the grave situation of indigenous persons who practised underwater fishing, but rejected the idea that the decompression syndrome affecting many of those fishermen and damaging their nervous systems, had anything to do with racial discrimination. Rather, it was due to the inability of fishing firms to ensure the safety of that type of activity and the failure of the authorities to supervise it. The current administration had taken a number of measures to deal with the situation. It was unfortunate that the Honduran Government had not been able to provide the Special Rapporteur with up-to-date information on the question. The first version of the Special Rapporteur's official report had been received on 21 December 2004, in French, accompanied by a request for the Government to communicate its observations by 15 January 2005, which had been totally unrealistic. The Spanish version had not been received until the end of January, although the Government's reply had been due by 21 February at the latest. Given that the Special Rapporteur's visit had taken place in July 2004, to proceed in such a fashion was in his view neither effective nor fair to the authorities of the country concerned.

21. Mr. CRUZ (Observer for Nicaragua) thanked the Special Rapporteur for his report on his mission to Nicaragua (E/CN.4/2005/18/Add.6), which noted perceptible progress in the area of ethnic rights. Fully cognizant of its multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual nature, Nicaragua had taken measures to ensure legal protection for its minorities and given them an institutional framework. The regulations on the autonomous status of communities on the Atlantic coast had entered into force in 2003, as had the law on the communal property regime for the indigenous peoples and ethnic communities in the autonomous regions of the Atlantic coast and the rivers Bocay, Coco, Indio and Maíz, with the Government supporting the financial and practical modalities of its implementation. A secretariat for Atlantic coast affairs had been established in 2004 under the Office of the President to improve coordination of measures for the development of the autonomous regions. The autonomous status responded to a historical aspiration of the inhabitants of the coastal region while reaffirming the principle of unity in diversity which characterized Nicaragua.

22. With the support of donor countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Nicaraguan Government had undertaken major projects in hard-to-reach underprivileged areas, in particular an initiative in the educational sector which would enable primary school pupils to receive schooling in their mother tongue. The Government had also introduced a national development plan with an overall perspective that targeted all minority sectors in the country. It would pursue its policy of cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner in order to put into effect a national human rights plan for all Nicaraguans. Recognizing the important role of the special rapporteurs, his delegation urged them to take the specific situation in each country into account.

23. Mr. BEKE DASSYS (Côte d'Ivoire) thanked the Special Rapporteur for the quality of the work carried out following his visit to Côte d'Ivoire in early 2004, which had taken place in an extremely difficult security context. During his visit, the Ivorian authorities had cooperated fully with the Special Rapporteur and had facilitated his movements in the country and his meetings with the press. That showed that Côte d'Ivoire, which had been visited by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression a few days since and by two international United Nations Commissions of Inquiry in 2004, had nothing to hide.

24. As the Special Rapporteur had been able to see, Côte d'Ivoire did not have a tradition of xenophobia. Foreigners accounted for more than 26 per cent of the population. They occupied entire branches of the economy, sent money to their home countries, and in short worked freely in their professions. It was thus incorrect to say that xenophobia had led to war in Côte d'Ivoire. The country's authorities had succeeded in avoiding that pitfall and were making daily efforts to strengthen the cultural fabric that made Côte d'Ivoire one of the world's most racially mixed countries.

25. Côte d'Ivoire had never ordered the systematic expulsion of foreign nationals. The war which had broken out on 19 September 2002, and whose aim had been to overturn the nation's political institutions, had obviously created a situation of generalized insecurity which had compelled fellow Africans to return to their countries of origin and Ivorian citizens living in the neighbouring country to seek refuge abroad. Not enough had been said about the latter group. Despite the climate of war, Ivorian Muslims and Christians continued to live together in harmony.

26. Turning to the report itself, his delegation expressed the strongest reservations about certain accusations of human rights violations prefaced by "it appears that", which proved that they were mere allegations. But those allegations were very serious, and Côte d'Ivoire wondered whether anyone had the right to accuse a country on such evidence.

27. It emerged from the foregoing and from the report of the latest United Nations Commission of Inquiry that Côte d'Ivoire, which aroused cupidity in some quarters, had been the victim of attacks from abroad. The international community should call upon the instigators of the rebellion and their henchmen to stop inciting hatred and xenophobia.

28. Like every other country, Côte d'Ivoire wanted recognition of its inalienable right to determine who its nationals were, to establish its own rules in that regard, and to take its own

decisions, in full independence, concerning foreigners residing on its territory. The country could not be made a testing ground for another form of democracy. It was unfair and immoral to try to impose on Côte d'Ivoire what no other State in the world would be ready to accept.

29. Ms. REDINA (Russian Federation) pointed out that, at its previous session, the Commission on Human Rights had adopted the resolution submitted by Russia (2004/16) on the inadmissibility of certain practices that contributed to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In it, the Special Rapporteur was requested to solicit the views of Governments on the question. Unfortunately, that had not been done. Moreover, contrary to established practice, the Secretariat had not reminded Governments that they should submit information in accordance with the resolution. The Russian delegation was of the opinion that it was time to dispel that misunderstanding.

30. Ms. VERRIER-FRECHETTE (Canada) said that since the Special Rapporteur's visit to her country, efforts had been made to ensure the implementation of his recommendations. She would like to know whether the Special Rapporteur was working with other special rapporteurs on a joint approach to the implementation of recommendations under the Special Procedures.

31. Canada supported in particular the Special Rapporteur's efforts to treat all forms of racism and discrimination equally and endorsed his conclusion that a hierarchization in that area could lead to a form of discrimination. On a related matter, a number of special rapporteurs took the question of sexual orientation or preference into account in their studies. The Canadian delegation asked the Special Rapporteur to what extent certain forms of racism could be exacerbated by sexual orientation and whether he intended in coming years to give closer attention to that aspect when he considered the many factors which contributed to aggravating discrimination.

32. Mr. ALEX (Observer for Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, stressed that, contrary to what the Special Rapporteur had said, religion was not one of the Copenhagen criteria for accession to the European Union.

33. The European Union shared the Special Rapporteur's view on the need to strengthen cooperation and complementarity between the United Nations and regional organizations. In that connection, it welcomed the Special Rapporteur's intention to collaborate more closely with the OSCE and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. The Luxembourg delegation would like to know about specific projects in that regard. The Council of Europe also played an important role in combating racism in Europe. How was the Special Rapporteur working with that organization?

34. The European Union had taken note with interest of the report on anti-Semitism, Christianophobia and Islamophobia. Those manifestations of intolerance were indeed most alarming, and several institutions were actively combating them in Europe. In his report, the Special Rapporteur stressed the need to treat those three phenomena equally. The European Union shared that view. It was important to avoid all hierarchization between victims and between their sufferings. While recognizing the specificities of each form of xenophobia, States must stress the universality of the fight against racism. What advice could be offered to attain that goal, and what role could civil society play in that regard?

35. In his report, the Special Rapporteur proposed to accord greater priority to the region of Sudan and to conduct a rigorous investigation of the ethnic dimension of the conflicts which were tearing the region apart. Could the Special Rapporteur specify what action he intended to take?

36. Mr. VIGNY (Observer for Switzerland) asked whether the intergovernmental working group was collaborating with the Council of Europe's Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which on that very day was presenting in Paris a new study on the use of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic arguments in election campaigns and political discourse in general. He also wondered what roles the authorities and civil society might play in implementing an intellectual strategy against racism. Noting that the Special Rapporteur stated in his report that the application of the principle of secularism might be an obstacle to the full participation of believers in public life, he asked whether the Special Rapporteur thought that that could also be the case when a secular State fully respected religious freedom.

37. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Cuba), referring to the growth of xenophobic, Nazi and fascist parties in prosperous, developed Europe, asked the Special Rapporteur whether it would be possible for him to compile a list of those parties. He also sought suggestions from the Special Rapporteur on ways of countering the new phenomenon of the growing exclusion of African-Americans from the electoral process in the United States.

38. Ms. HELLE AJAMAY (Observer for Norway) subscribed to the principle according to which States should combat all forms of racism and discrimination equally. Noting that the Special Rapporteur invited civil society to become more involved in the fight against racism in sport, she asked for proposals and information on good practices in that regard.

39. Mr. CERDA (Argentina) said that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action should be taken into account when devising the intellectual strategy referred to in paragraph 48 (b) of the report (document E/CN.4/2005/18). The appeal for a dialogue that the Special Rapporteur recommended the Commission to put out (document E/CN.4/2005/18/Add.4, paragraph 68) should be addressed above all to States and not only to religious and cultural communities.

40. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) asked whether the intergovernmental working group and the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination were cooperating in any way.

41. Ms. AL-HAJJAJI (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Arab League, wondered whether it might not be better to speak of identity preservation rather than identity construction. As the Special Rapporteur noted, the construction of an identity often resulted in the creation of an enemy, and throughout the report that enemy featured as Islam. In some Western countries, Muslim immigrants and asylum-seekers were subjected to many restrictions, veiled women were attacked, and the image of Islam was reduced to polygamy and violence. The addendum on defamation of religions (E/CN.4/2005/18/Add.4) was far from giving satisfaction to Muslim Arabs, and it was to be hoped that the Special Rapporteur would take his study of the phenomenon further in his next report.

42. Mr. KONG (China) commended the Special Rapporteur for his very comprehensive analysis of the situation. China fully supported his work and hoped that all countries would continue to cooperate with him.

43. Mr. DIÈNE (Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance), replying to the questions asked, stressed that racism and discrimination must be viewed from a long-term perspective. Identity constructions in particular played a central role in racist manifestations. The Commission should take that point into account in its resolutions. He also pointed out that Latin America was a region with a historical legacy of violence dating back to the conquest and to slavery, and that racial prejudices had been one of the ideological underpinnings in national identity constructions. Combating racism in that region was thus tantamount to undertaking an in-depth deconstruction process.

44. He underscored how important it was to treat all forms of racism and discrimination equally. Equality of treatment was jeopardized firstly by the natural tendency of victims to withdraw into their experience and ascribe to it a unique quality, and secondly by the risk of political instrumentalization, which led some leaders to attach greater importance to one particular racist manifestation than to others. Cooperation was essential to combating the protean and ever resurgent monster of racism. To combat the growing tensions associated with identity, particularly in Europe, he was cooperating, for example, with the Vienna-based European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and with other organizations, and he was planning a joint initiative on the question of racism in sport.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT ON ITS FOURTH SESSION (E/CN.4/2005/21)

45. Mr. KASANDA (Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent), presented the report of the fourth session of the Working Group that had been held in Geneva from 25 October to 5 November 2004 and had focused on three main themes: employment, health and housing. The discussion had revealed that people of African descent continued to be affected by racism and discrimination in those three areas, something that, given the historical and contemporary injustices towards them in many countries throughout the world, was not really surprising. As regards employment, they bore the brunt of direct and indirect racism at all levels: recruitment, promotion, access to in-service training, disciplinary procedures and remuneration. They had difficulty in obtaining access to health care for practical or financial reasons. And, as for housing, they often lived in ghettos with inadequate service infrastructure.

46. In its report, the Working Group identified a number of measures designed to address those problems. First, emphasis should be laid on the responsibility of States, which must have the political will to put in place administrative, political and other mechanisms to combat racism and racial discrimination, and must allocate sufficient financial resources for that purpose. Secondly, data must be collected, disaggregated by race and sex, so that appropriate corrective measures could be taken. Thirdly, best practices should be encouraged so as to promote a rights-based anti-discrimination strategy. Coupled with effective anti-discrimination laws, those practices would enable people of African descent who were victims of racial discrimination to claim for damages and be sure that legal action would be taken against the guilty parties.

47. He expressed concern at the dwindling number of NGOs participating in the meetings of the Working Group and pressed for financial assistance to be granted them. He also urged members of the Western Group of States to share their considerable experience and contribute to the formulation of effective mechanisms to combat the racism and racial discrimination experienced by people of African descent.

48. Mr. CERDA (Argentina) thanked the Chairperson-Rapporteur for his presentation and asked him what he intended to do to ensure better coordination between the activities of the Working Group and those of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. He also wondered who would be responsible for collecting the data, and from what sources. Lastly, noting that it had been mainly States that had taken part in the discussions at the fourth session of the Working Group, he would like to see the experts contributing more actively.

49. Mr. REYES (Cuba) deplored the fact that people of African descent were insufficiently represented at the sessions of the Working Group, for financial reasons. He would like the Working Group to draw up indicative guidelines for the compilation of national statistics on people of African descent and the specific corrective measures that could be taken in their favour. He hoped that the Working Group would continue to study the possibility of devising international mechanisms to compensate people of African descent who were victims of racism and racial discrimination.

50. Mr. KONG (China) stressed the importance of on-site visits and enquired whether progress had been made in that area.

51. Mr. KASANDA (Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent), responding to the questions asked, firstly by Argentina, said that it was primarily the responsibility of governments to collect statistics, along with civil society, taking a variety of factors into consideration, in particular the fact that some people were not willing to state that they were of African descent. Regarding the contribution of experts, several of them had not been able to participate all through the session because its dates had been changed. As to on-site visits, not only had the principle been accepted, but planning had already begun for the first visit which would take place during 2005 in a European country, to study the problems that people of African descent encountered locally. To conclude, he said that the Working Group, which was a relatively new body, was striving to convey to governments and to civil society that the fight against discrimination towards people of African descent could only be won if it was dealt with from a human-rights perspective.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON ITS THIRD SESSION (E/CN.4/2005/20)

52. Mr. MARTABIT (Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action) said that the Working Group had held its third session at the end of 2004. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights had noted, it was a special forum for sharing experiences, promoting best practices and examining the issues involved in the fight against racism. The initial political difficulties had faded away over time as a climate of confidence was established in the Group.

In line with the decisions taken at its first session, the Working Group had divided its work between two main areas: thematic issues and complementary standards. At the session he was reporting on, the thematic analysis had focused on two subjects: health and the Internet.

53. With regard to the drawing up of complementary standards to strengthen the fight against racism, the Group had adopted a common approach based on first evaluating the existing standards and their application in order to identify any deficiencies. Certain delegations had felt, however, that current international standards were not sufficient, some pointing out the existence of new forms of racism such as the propagation of xenophobic and racist ideology on the Internet, and others arguing that new standards were needed to penalize multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination. Another group of delegates had commented that, first of all, better application of the existing instruments was needed; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination had not yet been ratified by all States and there were a number of obstacles to its implementation.

54. He had three comments to make about the work of the third session of the Working Group. First, he was pleased to note that all the recommendations adopted during that session had been so by consensus; the Chairperson had insisted upon it, given that the final documents of the Durban Conference had themselves been adopted by consensus. However, that result would lose much of its value if the resolutions on racism submitted to the Commission or to the Third Committee of the General Assembly were not adopted by consensus.

55. Secondly, he was pleased to report that an increasing number of government delegations from all regional groups had participated in the third session of the Working Group, and he called on those delegations that had been absent thus far to join the Group's work at future sessions. The responsibility for effectively implementing the Durban Declaration lay with all States and needed the participation of civil society at all levels.

56. Thirdly, the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and, generally speaking, the fight against racism within the international system of human rights protection required closer collaboration between all the mechanisms and bodies involved: the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Group of Independent Eminent Experts, the intergovernmental Working Group, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In conclusion, he thanked the Office of the High Commissioner, particularly the Anti-Discrimination Unit, for the support afforded to the Working Group.

57. Mr. BERNES (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), said that the accession countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, and the potential candidate countries in the stabilization and association process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, together with Iceland, member of EFTA and of the European Economic Area, associated themselves with his statement. The European Union noted that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was central to the activities conducted by the United Nations. It was therefore imperative to achieve universal ratification of that instrument and ensure concrete implementation of its provisions.

The EU welcomed the contribution of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and, having taken an active part in the thematic discussions that the Committee had held on the prevention of genocide, encouraged it to continue its consideration of the role that it could play within the United Nations to prevent crimes against humanity and genocide.

58. The European Union believed it was essential for the follow-up to the Durban Conference to be decided by consensus. It was therefore pleased with the results achieved at the last General Assembly and hoped that the same spirit of dialogue and compromise would prevail during the Commission's deliberations. It must be ensured that the mechanisms created for the purposes of the follow-up to the Durban Conference worked in an efficient and constructive manner and produced practical recommendations to help States fight racism. It was indeed primarily the responsibility of States to take measures to combat xenophobia and promote tolerance. The European Union had taken an active role in the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective application of the Durban Declaration that had held its third session the previous October, and had associated itself with the conclusions adopted by consensus.

59. The European Union thanked the Office of the High Commissioner for its considerable contribution to the fight against racism and discrimination and particularly welcomed the efforts it was making to publicize the recommendations of the Durban Conference through United Nations activities. It appreciated the fact that the Special Rapporteur had decided to give particular attention to manifestations of anti-Semitism, Christianophobia and Islamophobia, as those forms of intolerance gave the most reason for concern. It reiterated the importance it attached to the fight against all manifestations of racial or religious intolerance, including anti-Semitism, of which there was unfortunately a resurgence in Europe. In that regard it shared the Special Rapporteur's view that it was important not to place victims in any sort of hierarchy. Finally, it welcomed the Special Rapporteur's decision to strengthen collaboration with regional organizations in the fight against racism and racial discrimination and was particularly looking forward to the future collaboration between the Special Rapporteur and European organizations in studying the situation in the countries of Europe.

60. Action to combat racism must be taken at all levels. The European Union and its member States were therefore taking an active part in the work carried out in that field by the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thus the European Union intended to cooperate actively with the three personal representatives appointed by the incumbent OSCE Chairman, in the framework of its global action to promote tolerance and to follow up on the conferences against racism and discrimination held in Berlin, Paris and Brussels in 2004. The Union would also participate in the Conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance to be held the following June in Córdoba.

61. The European Union also welcomed the recent decision to create the European Roma and Travellers Forum associated with the Council of Europe. That body would enable the Roma and travellers to voice their concerns themselves at the international level.

62. Discrimination was forbidden under the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which was incorporated into the draft European Constitution approved by the European Council in June 2004. On that basis, among others, the European Union member States had adopted

national legislation aimed at combating discrimination. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, together with the national courts, were also contributing to the fight against racism.

63. Discrimination could take many, often insidious, forms. The European Union reaffirmed the unacceptability of any discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. In that regard, the Union was seriously concerned about the persistence of unacceptable acts of violence, persecution and denial of fundamental freedoms and human rights on grounds of sexual orientation. It was also concerned about discrimination on grounds of descent. That type of discrimination based on membership of castes affected many people in the world. He asked all member States to accord due attention to the Sub-Commission's initiative on that issue, which would be submitted to the Commission at the current session. Racism and denial of diversity could constitute the start of a conflict. In the most serious cases, they could lead to crimes against humanity and genocide. That warranted increased vigilance on the part of the international community.

64. Ms. AL-HAJJAJI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the League of Arab States, thanked OHCHR for the interesting documents provided under agenda item 6 but regretted that they were not available in Arabic, which would have made it possible to ensure their wide dissemination.

65. One of the most important points raised in the report of the Special Rapporteur related to the upsurge in Islamophobia, i.e. in hostility towards Arabs and Muslims. That hostility was characterized both by intellectual vindication of hostility towards Islam and its followers, and by political tolerance of such hostility towards Arabs and Muslims in many countries. In a good many western States, Arab and Muslim immigrants were exposed to ill-treatment, persecution and verbal or physical attacks. Even their places of worship and their cemeteries were targeted.

66. She referred to the concept of cultural citizenship, originated by Renato Rosaldo, professor of anthropology at Stanford University, which drew a distinction between political citizenship and cultural citizenship. The enjoyment of the latter meant that minority communities could preserve their own identity, different from the majority culture, while respecting the law and the rules in force in the State where they lived.

67. That notion of cultural citizenship, which implied a recognition of cultural diversity, had many advantages. It enriched host countries and made it possible to resolve many social problems that western societies currently faced owing to the growing number of immigrant workers and refugees. The possibility of preserving the principles and ways of life of their original culture without undermining the functioning of the societies which took them in encouraged immigrants to be good citizens. Seeking to impose a dominant way of thinking or culture, especially by force, was dangerous and contrary to the very principles of democracy. Lack of knowledge about and respect for different cultures often resulted in unbalanced relationships and continuous tension between peoples and communities. The Arab countries endorsed the statement made by the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the Commission concerning the social environment currently facing Muslims and Arabs in western countries.

68. The Arab States denounced the racist practices of the State of Israel towards the Palestinian people. The Palestinians were subjected to serious discrimination as a result of a number of laws promulgated by the State of Israel and designed to expand Jewish colonization to the detriment of Palestinian Arabs. Thus, pursuant to a law of 1950 on the right of return, any Jewish person had the right to return to Palestine whereas the Palestinians had been stripped of that right after having been driven off their land. Pursuant to the law of 1952 on nationality, any Jewish immigrant had the right to Israeli nationality as soon as he or she arrived in Israel. Subsequent amendments to that law had further reinforced the racial nature of those provisions by authorizing the Ministry of the Interior, on the one hand, to grant Israeli nationality to any Jewish person who had the right of return, even before arrival in Palestine and, on the other, to take away Israeli citizenship from any person believed to pose a threat to the country's security. The property legislation justified confiscating land from Palestinians in order to give it to Jewish colonists. Furthermore, the construction of the security wall, which isolated Palestinians from their natural environment and often entailed the destruction of their houses, was obvious discrimination reminiscent of the apartheid regime in the former South Africa.

69. In view of the foregoing considerations, the Arab States invited the Special Rapporteur to visit the occupied Arab Palestinian territories in order to prepare a report on those racist laws and practices for presentation to the Commission and the General Assembly at their next sessions.

70. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) said that he had noted a certain reluctance, if not apathy, on the part of the international community with regard to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action. He would therefore like the Commission to play a catalysing role in combating racism.

71. Like the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference were concerned about the particular form of discrimination represented by Islamophobia. Like him, they thought that the legal strategy should be reinforced by an intellectual and ethical strategy if Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism were to be effectively fought. Further, they welcomed the report published on 7 March 2005 by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), entitled "Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the European Union - New facts since 11 September".

72. Islamophobia was a dangerous phenomenon that was quickly gaining ground and that must urgently be prevented from spreading further. Under the agenda item on racism, OIC had been drawing the Commission's attention for several years to the upsurge in discrimination against Muslims. The Special Rapporteur had said at the current meeting that Muslims were increasingly marginalized and their rights violated, pointing out too that, in many countries, Islamophobia was increasingly characterized by intellectual justification of hostility towards Islam and its followers and by political tolerance of such hostility. The Special Rapporteur noted that acts of discrimination against and attacks on Muslims had become more frequent; that several countries had elaborated draft laws against racism and discrimination which gave explicit priority to types of discrimination other than Islamophobia; and that a mindset of suspicion was emerging with regard to Islam, which was increasingly in the position of the accused, forced to defend itself and to prove its moderation. In conclusion, the Special Rapporteur had recommended that the authorities of the countries concerned should officially acknowledge the

reality of Islamophobia. OIC too believed that the authorities should punish Islamophobic acts and condemn Islamophobic writing or speech. Furthermore, OIC supported all the recommendations made in the IHF report. In other words, the States concerned should ensure protection for Muslims and other vulnerable minority groups; guarantee that perpetrators of acts of violence and discrimination directed against those groups would be effectively prosecuted and punished; develop training programmes for members of the police; take measures to eliminate discrimination against Muslims with regard to employment and access to housing and services; advise the press to show awareness of its responsibilities by refraining from giving a bad image of Islam and Muslims; and amend or abrogate any law relating to immigration which instituted discrimination for reasons connected with religion, nationality or ethnicity.

73. OIC called for prompt implementation of those recommendations. It asked the Special Rapporteur to follow their application closely and to present his conclusions to the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights at its next session. In view of the worrying information given by IHF and the Special Rapporteur in their report, he hoped that the delegations which had previously abstained from voting on the resolution submitted by OIC concerning the fight against defamation of religions would support that draft resolution at the current session.

74. Mr. YIMER (Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance were of course vital issues for the African Group. Slavery, colonialism and apartheid had ruined the African continent. It was because of those evils, that Africa was currently experiencing poverty and underdevelopment. The African Group supported all peoples suffering under foreign occupation and, in that regard, hoped that the Palestinian State would soon be established.

75. Africans living abroad had always been the victims of racism and discrimination in such fields as education, employment, health and housing, which tended to make them into second class citizens. The African Group wished to emphasize that States and international organizations were responsible for ensuring that anti-terrorist measures were not accompanied by discrimination linked to race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. In that regard, States were asked to refrain from the practice of racial profiling. Lastly, the growing tendency to pander to right wing xenophobic views, which encouraged racism with its accompanying evils, was of great concern.

76. Three years after the third World Conference against Racism, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had still not been implemented, and the African Group urged the international community to support that programme. However, it was encouraging to see that the mechanisms put in place to promote the application of that declaration and programme of action had already made some progress. The African Group thought that those mechanisms had an important role to play and, for that reason, it had actively participated in the last sessions of the working group. He appealed to the Commission to support the holding of a high level seminar with a view, in particular to addressing gaps in international human rights instruments with regard to the fight against discrimination. As regards the elaboration of a racial equality index, another issue requiring urgent attention, the African Group took note of the High Commissioner's recommendation and asked for it to be implemented.

77. The African Group was concerned that insufficient resources were allocated to the OHCHR Anti-Discrimination Unit, and thought that encouraging professional prospects should be offered to the staff who made up that group. In conclusion, he said that the African Group would submit a resolution on racism, which he hoped would be supported by all regional groups.

78. Mr. ALTHANI (Qatar), after stressing the importance of the Durban Conference, at which the serious nature of racial discrimination and the threats it carried, inter alia to international peace and security, had been emphasized, pointed out that his country was one of the first to have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Qatar had spared no effort to incorporate all the principles proclaimed in Durban into its legislation. In Qatar, all individuals were equal before the law and, as from 6 July 2004, the Labour Law provided for equal treatment of all workers, whether expatriate or local. The penal legislation of 2004 banned all forms of discrimination, and institutions had been established with the task of ensuring that the ban was effectively implemented. One of those institutions was Qatar's human rights commission, which had been mandated to advise the Government on that issue, to investigate any violations, and to prepare reports for submission to human rights treaty bodies.

Mr. Escudero Martinez (Ecuador), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

79. Mr. LA Yifan (China) deplored the fact that, almost four years after the Durban Conference, far from declining racism was on the increase and was being manifested in new forms. Not so long ago, Chinese citizens and trades people had become the target of a wave of racism in one western country, which had had serious consequences. The xenophobia shown towards Muslims since the events of 11 September was also of great concern.

80. If resolute measures were not taken against the most extreme forms of racism, such as the new theory of racial superiority, it was to be feared that neo-nazism, neo-fascism and the calamities with which they were fraught would once again come to the fore. It sufficed to look back at history to understand that what he was saying was not mere alarmism.

81. In the face of that situation, the Chinese delegation made the following recommendations. Firstly, countries must take the problem of racism seriously and make every effort to eradicate it. Secondly, the international community must speak out resolutely for racial equality and harmony and for dialogue between civilizations. The gap between rich and poor, allied to intolerance, fostered racism. In view of history and of current reality, western countries bore the primary responsibility for reducing the gap between rich and poor countries and achieving racial harmony. The entire international community must contribute to that effort through education campaigns. Lastly, the United Nations must reinforce the efficiency of the mechanisms which it had set up to combat racism, by increasing the human and financial resources allocated to them and ensuring wider publicity for their work.

82. Mr. BARREIRO (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of MERCOSUR and its associated States, recalled that 21 March 2005 marked the forty-fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. That date had been chosen to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Since that symbolic day also coincided with the beginning of the general debate on item 6, it implied a commitment on the part of the Commission. That commitment had been entered into by MERCOSUR and its associated States, which had placed

the fight against racism and the promotion of racial equality among their priorities. The member States of MERCOSUR and its associated States recognized the cultural contribution of Latin-Americans of African descent, indigenous people and migrants to the establishment and development of the societies of the continent.

83. In recent years the States of MERCOSUR and its associated States had made significant progress in promoting full racial equality. Since 2001, the MERCOSUR countries had set themselves as a priority in the field of human rights in the implementation of the Santiago and Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the follow-up to which was being ensured by the competent authorities and the ministries of foreign affairs of those countries. In that connection, he emphasized the importance of the Santiago Conference held in 2000, at which it had been possible not only to prepare for the World Conference but also to supplement and broaden at the regional level the worldwide agreements reached in Durban. It was not by chance that Chile, an associated State of MERCOSUR, had hosted that preparatory regional conference, and that Uruguay, a member State, had hosted the regional workshop on the adoption and application of voluntarist policies in favour of persons of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. At that workshop, the need had been recognized to adopt positive strategies to remedy the inequalities from which persons of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean suffered, which meant reducing poverty, combating discrimination in the administration of justice, preventing excessive use of force by the police, and promoting the rights of those groups to health, education, housing and a cultural identity. In that regard, the appointment by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons of African descent and against racial discrimination should be welcomed as progress. Further, the MERCOSUR countries were actively participating in the elaboration of a draft inter-American legal instrument against racism and all forms of discrimination.

84. At the global level, MERCOSUR considered it necessary to reinforce the human and financial resources of the OHCHR anti-discrimination group. MERCOSUR also supported the activities of other mechanisms created in order to follow closely the implementation of the objectives defined in Durban. It was indisputable that the groups which had always been marginalized and subjected to discrimination, such as persons of African descent, indigenous people and migrant workers, must be at the heart of policies against racism and racial discrimination and of affirmative action programmes.

85. The resurgence of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in recent years was alarming and made the promotion of tolerance indispensable. Education had a fundamental role to play in that regard, as also had poverty eradication and access to justice. It was vital to take into account ethnic and racial factors when pursuing the Millennium Development Goals. If non-discrimination and promotion of racial equality were the governing principles in the attainment of those objectives, significant progress would have been made in the implementation of the commitments undertaken in Durban.

86. Mr. FERRER RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that his delegation shared the Special Rapporteur's concerns about the upsurge in manifestations of racism in sports, mainly in developed countries, and the loss of ground in the fight against racism, evidenced in particular, by the intellectual justification of racism in the media and the human sciences.

87. There was a disturbing growth in the strength of right-wing parties, which were adopting xenophobic programmes, in particular in developed countries, on the pretext of combating immigration and terrorism or protecting national security. Some people went to the length of cynically justifying the impunity accorded to such elements by the need to defend freedom of opinion and association.

88. Indigenous populations, ethnic groups, minorities and other categories of social group were still being subjected to social exclusion and marginalization, especially in developed countries. In addition, numerous discriminatory laws and migration policies were being adopted, and anti-terrorist laws left much room for arbitrary actions and for the exercise of authority on racist and xenophobic principles.

89. And yet, science had proved that race was a subjective concept based on prejudice. Genetic studies had shown that the human species was indivisible and that there was no difference in intelligence between what was commonly referred to as “races”.

90. Neo-liberal globalization contributed to spreading racism in the world, by exploiting information technologies and abusing the tolerance of public authorities. Some transnational power groups, based in the developed countries, defended their political, cultural and juridical values and prescriptions, together with their concepts of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in a completely arbitrary manner. Civilizations and religions such as Islam were the first victims of their propaganda, designed to discredit them. Thus, Muslims became the target of acts of discrimination and even vandalism.

91. “Environmental racism” had developed in industrialized countries with regard to underdeveloped countries, in the same manner as it was practised in developed countries towards minorities and poor communities. The export of dangerous technologies and chemicals to underdeveloped countries, and the use of some of those countries to test new weapons, were irrefutable proof of that form of discrimination.

92. The exacerbation by the Government of President Bush of the “myth of the chosen people” in order to direct the destinies of the rest of the world was giving rise to dangerous political, racial and cultural fundamentalism.

93. The recent murder of the mother and husband of the American district judge Joan Humphrey seemed like a re-enactment of the worst moments in the days of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. That judge had been killed by white supremacists because of her ruling against the leader of the organization “Creativity”, which defended the concept of the superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon race.

94. In the United States, the risk for indigenous people, who numbered 2 million, of suffering from illness, in particular tuberculosis, was eight times higher than for other citizens. Thirty-seven per cent of them died before the age of 45 years. The suicide rate among those populations was three times higher and the rate of infant mortality 60 per cent higher than the national average.

95. White Anglo-Saxons had 11 times more resources than Hispanics and 14 times more than Afro-Americans. One could not speak of genuine democracy, human rights and freedom when relations in and between countries were governed by racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, inequality and inequity.

96. Mr. PARK In-kook (Republic of Korea) said that the horrible massacres in Rwanda, the killings in Srebrenica and the current frightening situation in Darfur were a brutal reminder of the fact that racial discrimination and xenophobia were not disappearing and that one could not insist too much on the need for vigilance at the international level. In addition, as the five distinguished independent experts had emphasized during their second meeting, modern forms of racism and xenophobia were gaining ground, including in the legal sphere and in the rhetoric of political parties. Such was the situation, though four years had passed since the third World Conference Against Racism, whose programme of action States had solemnly committed themselves to implementing. Although States had the primary responsibility for combating racism, the international community must take on more concrete commitments in that regard. He welcomed the holding of the third session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which had met in October 2004. As the Group had pointed out, education and awareness-raising, in particular among young people, were the main means of combating racism. In that regard, close cooperation should be established between OHCHR and UNESCO. The Republic of Korea also welcomed the launching in January 2005 of the World Programme For Human Rights Education. The Korean Government had also taken various measures in that field, ranging from publication of manuals to production of films and strip cartoons, and including distribution of CDs on human rights.

97. Those initiatives should be supplemented by administrative and legal measures. In particular, remedies against discriminatory practices should be introduced at the national level. Thus, in November 2001, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea had drafted an anti-discrimination law which formally prohibited racial discrimination, incitement to hatred and associated intolerance. Those efforts had led to the adoption in August 2004 of a system of work permits, under which foreign workers enjoyed the same rights as Korean workers. That system should ensure greater protection against discrimination for foreign workers.

98. Mr. SMITH (Australia) said that his Government was resolutely committed to preserving the country's great cultural diversity, which encompassed the indigenous patrimony, the heritage of the first European colonies, and local traditions together with those of the various categories of migrants - more than 6 million since 1947 - who had settled in the country. Cultural and religious diversity was the main characteristic of contemporary Australian identity. Thus, it was not surprising that the Australian Government was determined to maintain a tradition of tolerance and respect for diversity, which was the foundation of a harmonious multicultural society!

99. On the domestic front, Australia tackled racial discrimination in two ways. Firstly, there was the law of 1975 on racial discrimination whereby Australia had undertaken to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. That law, adopted at the federal level, had been supplemented by similar laws in each State and Territory. Education was the other means of preventing discriminatory behaviour. The Australian Government was deeply convinced that human rights education was the means par excellence to entrench authentic and

lasting respect for those rights. Recently, the Government had published a new national framework for the protection of human rights in Australia, which outlined the country's five major priorities in that field. One of the priority objectives was to help disadvantaged persons, in particular indigenous Australians, to develop their potential, and to protect them from discrimination, through a variety of programmes and services.

100. The Government's multicultural policy also helped to reinforce harmony between communities by promoting mutual respect, equality and social cohesion. Under that policy, all Australians had the opportunity to participate actively and on an equal footing in the life of Australian society while preserving their religious and cultural traditions, in compliance with the law.

101. The Government had also launched a programme entitled "Diversity works" which was designed to encourage and take advantage of the diverse traditions and languages of Australian workers. Recruitment of bilingual workers in sectors such as tourism, marketing, public relations and education had obvious advantages, in particular for the economy. Another initiative, entitled "Living in harmony" was designed to facilitate the development of harmonious relations in communities and to eliminate racism. Highlighting the advantages of cultural diversity for all Australians was the common denominator of all those initiatives.

102. The Australian Government regretted that the Commission could not reach consensus on such an important issue as the fight against racial discrimination. Thus, Australia had had to abstain from voting on the resolution on the subject submitted to the Commission in 2004, owing to some of the terms used. That had not prevented the Australian Government from taking into account the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action when drawing up the national human rights programme which it had launched in 2004.

103. Mr. AYALOGU (Nigeria) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the permanent representative of Ethiopia as coordinator of the African Group. In view of the solemn commitments undertaken by the international community in Durban, Nigeria considered the continued manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia alarming. No country could claim to be immune to doctrines based on exclusion. Combating anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination must remain one of the main objectives of the international community. Nigeria had made it one of its main policy planks, both on the domestic front and in foreign relations. The international community had done the same and, in that regard, Nigeria welcomed the progress made by the United Nations anti-racism mechanisms. If the commitments undertaken at the international level in the field of human rights were not to remain purely formal, they must be accompanied by an accountability obligation. That also implied some form of assistance and international cooperation.

104. Mr. de ALBA (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American States and the Caribbean, deplored the fact that racist practices had become entrenched or were re-emerging in most societies. He recalled that the Durban World Conference Against Racism had highlighted the intrinsic links between racial discrimination and a whole range of social factors such as poverty, marginalization, social exclusion and economic inequalities. Accordingly, the

Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action should continue taking into account those various factors and the difficulties encountered in implementing the measures recommended at the Conference. That should make it possible to draw up a list of good practices and identify possible fields for cooperation.

105. On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), he welcomed the report of the intergovernmental working group on its third session, which had been presented by Ambassador Juan Martabit, permanent representative of Chile. In particular, he was gratified that the recommendations contained in that report had been adopted by consensus. GRULAC fully supported the method chosen by the working group, namely, first of all to examine the effective application of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and then to consider drafting complementary norms to strengthen the fight against racism. Given that the working group intended to hold a seminar on those complementary norms and the Internet, it would be desirable for it also to take into account those aspects of globalization which could lead to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, and also to consider ways to ensure that States, international financial institutions and international development agencies effectively contributed to the eradication of racism. Lastly, GRULAC was keen to learn about the medium-term plan that the High Commissioner had announced in October 2004 and which would consist in incorporating anti-discrimination measures in all field activities, as well as in technical cooperation projects, and associating the country teams with the combat against racism and the protection of minorities and indigenous peoples. Lastly, GRULAC joined its voice to those of States that had emphasized the need for greater coherence and better coordination between the mechanisms created as a follow-up to the Durban Conference, so as to avoid useless duplication. It would also be desirable to reinforce without delay the anti-discrimination group that had been created nearly three years previously but for which a coordinator had not yet been appointed.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.