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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-fourth session  
Item 23 of the draft provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON  
RELIGION OR BELIEF

Report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant  
to paragraph 11 of Commission on Human Rights  
resolution 1987/15

Addendum

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[Original: English]  
[14 December 1987]

Because of the importance of freedom of religion and belief, the United States is not opposed in principle to a convention on religious intolerance. However, we believe that the need for such a convention is significantly reduced by the existence of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (Religious Intolerance Declaration), which is a comprehensive international instrument on this subject. The Declaration was proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1981 (Resolution 36/55) and is the product of a 20-year international drafting effort. It is a carefully drafted statement regarded throughout the world as articulating the fundamental rights of freedom of religion and belief. Dr. Angelo Vidal D'Almeida Ribeiro of Portugal, the Commission's special rapporteur on religious intolerance, is working actively toward the goals of the Declaration.

Given the existence of the Declaration and the special rapporteur and the importance attached to them by the international community, the United States believes the negotiation of a religious intolerance convention would divert scarce United Nations and Member State resources from other pressing human rights matters. Moreover, the Declaration has only recently been disseminated in all six official languages of the United Nations, and the special rapporteur was only appointed in 1986. The opening of discussion on a religious intolerance convention with an inevitably long negotiation and ratification process would take attention and resources away from both the Declaration and the special rapporteur and might detract from the impact and significance of both.