

**TRANSCRIPT OF STATEMENTS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL
AND HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AT PRESS CONFERENCE
ON OPENING OF DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Following is a transcript of the remarks by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay made at a press conference in the Palais des Nations at the end of the opening day of the Durban Review Conference. The Review Conference, which runs from 20 to 24 April in Geneva, will assess progress made since the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa.

The UN Secretary-General: Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to see you again.

One of the primary roles of the United Nations is to mobilize action against the pervasive violations of human rights that take place in every part of our world. The fight against racism has been a core part of that mandate since the Organization's founding. And it is the evil of racism that I want you, as members of the media, to stress to your audiences.

Some people point to great strides that the world has made recently as evidence that racism is going away. But I am here to tell you that we still have to do much more. In fact, despite decades of advocacy, and despite the elaboration of a far-reaching legal framework, racism is something that we're still living with. Despite the efforts of many United Nations human rights bodies, and despite ample evidence of racism's terrible toll, millions upon millions of people continue to fall victim.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to take a few moments to tell you about something that seems especially sad to me right now. In the world that we are living in today, we have children that are growing up thinking that they are inferior simply because of the colour of their skin or the shape of their features.

And yet, it is not their stories that are being brought to the forefront now. In this regard, I deplore the use of this august platform by the Iranian President to accuse, divide and even incite. This is the opposite of what this Conference seeks to achieve.

This makes it significantly more difficult to build constructive solutions to the very real problem of racism.

It is deeply regrettable that my plea to look to the future of unity was not heeded by the Iranian President. At my earlier meeting this morning with him, I stressed the importance of the Conference to galvanize the will of the international community toward the common cause of the fight against racism.

We must join hands and work together to achieve a constructive, substantive agenda to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

It has been painful to see divisiveness where we should have had unity and a common sense of resolve. Racism is truly a global issue, and we need it to be discussed at a global level, however sensitive and difficult that may be.

I always believed it is far better being inside the room, making one's case, than standing aside and depriving others of additional perspectives and approaches. That is what the United Nations is all about – people coming together from all walks of life to engage in dialogue and find common ground so that all members of our global community can live in peace and dignity. And that is why I am here today.

I appeal to all to see this as the beginning of a process. It is not an end. Obviously, we have much work to do. We need to build on the progress we have made and grow beyond the divisions that prevent us from moving ahead.

I will now give the floor to High Commissioner Navi Pillay and I will be very happy to answer your questions afterwards. Thank you.

High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay: Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General. First of all I want to mention how important it is for the Durban Review Conference that we have the Secretary-General come from New York to participate in this event. His speech sets out, as did mine, the principle goals of this Conference.

As you know, I have been speaking with some of you on a regular basis. We have been working for many months on the outcome document of this Conference. And I now have before us a document that has been accepted by all the regional groups, including States in Europe who have since decided to stay away from the Conference.

This outcome document is likely to be adopted fairly soon – in the next two days. I begin by mentioning this because, for me, what's important is the goal of this Conference, and that is for millions of victims all over the world. [For them,] this Conference is very important; they look to the States to come up with some global guidelines, global strategies to implement best practices to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. And we are looking for practices that will then filter down these measures that we devise at the global level to go to regional levels and national levels. And that is the goal. That is my goal as High Commissioner of Human Rights. I speak for victims; and I keep that vision straight before me.

I want to join in the comments made by the Secretary-General on the address made by the President of Iran this afternoon. I join with the Secretary-General in utterly deploring the speech. In my view, I think it is improper for a United Nations forum to be used for political grandstanding and I find this totally objectionable. Much of the speech of the President of Iran was clearly beyond the scope of the Conference, which is, as you all know, racism, racial discrimination and action plans to implement the undertakings made by the States eight years ago.

That is the scope of the Conference. And this would have been clear to you as you followed the speeches made by the large number of Ministers who addressed the Conference, and are still doing so, after the President spoke. Each one of

these Ministers showcased how they had addressed these problems in their own countries. And this is what I consider as the scope of the Conference. And this is what I would have expected the President of Iran to come and tell us: how is he addressing racial discrimination and intolerances in his country.

It also clearly went against the longstanding United Nations position adopted by the General Assembly with respect to equating Zionism with racism. We have always urged that we respect United Nations General Assembly positions and United Nations positions with regard to recognition of States and statehood, and of course the names by which we call States.

However, here, I want to emphasize that to me the best riposte to this type of event is to reply, to correct, and not to walk away; not to withdraw and boycott the Conference. If that happens, who is going to provide a rational response to what had been said?

Fortunately, we have some very good examples of other speakers. I refer you to the speech delivered by the Norwegian Foreign Minister, who spoke immediately after the President of Iran, in which the Foreign Minister of Norway said, and I quote: "Norway is ready to accept the text as it stands. Exaggeration, divisive and extreme statements from the floor cannot change that fact."

I applaud these sentiments. We definitely need to value that we have an outcome document which has provisions adopted by all the regional groups and with which we plan to move on.

Of course, I also noted that what was said in the President's speech has had nothing to do with the substance of the Conference. And so it should have nothing to do with the results and st-0.0001 T5(t9nd st arao d)60 Tred by 1 Tsam7f

have loved to have been sitting in that Hall and having the opportunity to make statements, as Member States do.

So if one State, such as happened here in the case of Iran, makes statements that we all disagree with, then where is the alternate voice that would set out the positive lines? Fortunately, a number of Ministers – I've already addressed this – they've said that States should not walk out of a Conference; they should remain and state their position. This was, as

people being pinned on this. With reference to the global food insecurity, there was a G8 summit that closed today in Italy and the other day in this room one of the senior officials said over a 100 million people would be added to poverty, so what is your message as the people at the bottom of the queue are not getting a voice here?

The Secretary-General: This morning in my opening statement I made it quite clear that poverty, development and racism – they are all interconnected. A mentioned food security issues. I mentioned the Millennium Development Goals. I have been working in a comprehensive way on how we can address all these global issues, starting from food security, the development crisis, the climate change crisis and, on top of all of this, the global economic crisis.

That is what the United Nations, and I as Secretary-General, have been dealing with in close coordination with G20 leaders and also members of the G77. Still, there are 1 billion people who go to bed hungry every night and this situation has deteriorated after the onset of the financial crisis. We are working very hard on this. I am now working in close coordination the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to create a special financial mechanism to help those people – small holding farmers – who do not have any capacity, who do not have any agricultural inputs. That is where we are putting our best efforts at this time.

I know that when there is absolute despair this will breed distrust and that can create all this intolerance and distrust which involves into regional and global troubles, global instabilities. That is why I am urging and doing [my all] to address all these issues in a comprehensive way.

The High Commissioner: I would invite you to see the video we have on “Voices of victims” which just clearly shows you that poverty is related so closely to racial discrimination. [It is] the poorest of the poor, and they are the ones who are discriminated [against], who suffer the most because of the food shortage. Also I want to point to the value of the question you have raised – and that it affects hundreds of millions of people – because I want to bring back to you why I feel the situation is so serious. There is no room for political posturing by some States because somebody who traditionally makes obnoxious statements has once again done so.
