

General Assembly high level meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary

New York

22 September 2011

Opening remarks by Mr Anwar Kemal

Round table 1

recognition, justice and development

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Mr Secretary-General,
Madame High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour to represent the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at this high level meeting. The Committee has the pleasure to announce the adoption of its 70th session report and its recommendations to press for its implementation. CERD values the DDPA and the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference, because they comprehensively complement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary, the Committee issued a statement at its 70th session, ending earlier this month, emphasizing that the DDPA and the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference offer a comprehensive framework for the elimination of racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Moreover, the Committee has adopted two relevant General Recommendations: NO. 28 of 2002 dealing with the follow-up to the DDPA and General Recommendation NO. 29 of 2002 on the Convention and provide specific information on action plans and other measures taken to

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Convention came into force more than 40 years ago. At that time, the system of apartheid based on the odious concept of racial superiority held sway in much of Southern Africa. In

progress has been made in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance since the adoption of the Convention and the DDPA.

with all its mutations and combinations. The experience of CERD suggests that it is quite difficult to compute the number of people who are victims of racial discrimination because victims suffer in silence, while remedies available to them are not necessarily effective. The Committee calls upon States parties to strengthen their data collection system and to provide the

The Committee has also noticed that in many cases it is extremely difficult to establish racial discrimination has been completely ignored in national laws and in others legal proceedings have been slow and cumbersome. The Committee has consistently expressed concern over the use of hate speech, racism in sports, dissemination of racist ideas, be it on the internet or by politicians and media persons in their public discourse. States have been requested to establish or strengthen appropriate mechanisms at the national level to fight racial discrimination.

As part of its mandate, CERD always focuses on the needs of vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, minorities, migrant workers, African-descendants, Roma and other minorities that face multiple forms of discrimination, including de facto segregation and lack of access to adequate housing and education. Such groups are often subjected to some forms of racial equality before the law in the enjoyment of their human rights.

During its dialogue with State parties, States are requested, as appropriate to enact legislation to prohibit racial discrimination, to prosecute offenders and ensure that effective remedies are available to victims.

Provided that the State concerned has made a declaration to recognize the Committee's competence under Article 14, victims of racial discrimination have the right to send individual communications to the Committee. In this regard, there is room for improvement as only 54 States parties have made the optional declaration and as a consequence the individual communication as a whole is unduly delayed in spite of repeated requests to States parties by the Committee and the General Assembly.

CERD has also put into place an early warning and urgent action procedure to deal with potentially grave violations of human rights.

In line with its mandate and in order to facilitate the implementation of the Convention by State parties, the Committee has adopted a number of General Recommendations setting out the legal bases for the recognition of categories of vulnerable groups. Among these, I wish to highlight the Committee's General Recommendation 25 (2000) on gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination in which the Committee recognizes that some forms of racial discrimination have a unique and specific impact on women and therefore advises States parties to identify, compare and take steps to remedy forms of racial discrimination against women that may otherwise go unnoticed and unaddressed.

Furthermore, at its recently concluded 70th session, the Committee adopted General

has become evident from the examination of States parties reports that social and structural

Discrimination against African descent and analysis of disaggregated data on the situation of people of African descent

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to reaffirm the vital and positive role of civil society actors, particularly national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations in the fight against racial discrimination, a role which often benefits victims of racial discrimination.

The economic and financial crisis is another hurdle that has cropped up recently, which could lead to the curtailment of resources in States parties that may be needed to improve the situation of

Secretariat needs adequate resources to carry out its significantly enlarged mandate.

As we start discussing the theme of this Round Table: "Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: our responsibility to eliminate and combat racism and racial discrimination. Protecting the countless victims of insidious or blatant forms of racial discrimination in their daily lives in our societies is also part of our mission. We also encourage the international community to continue to act in face of potential threats of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by reaffirming our Committee's strong support to mobilizing and energizing the political will of States to build world free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.