

UN General Assembly, Third Committee  
November 23, 2010  
Explanation of Vote on A/C.3/65/L.60

Global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

NETHERLANDS: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks. The Netherlands regrets that it will have to vote against the resolution on the global effort for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive and implementation of and the follow up to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. Allow me to briefly explain our position. Let me begin by expressing my amazement and dismay, Mr. President, by the way in which at the very last moment just before the vote, a whole series of substantial amendments was introduced by the main sponsors of this resolution. They showed fundamental disrespect for the other delegations here in this room, a disrespect apparently based on the idea we have the majority. We can do whatever we want. This by itself is sufficient reason to vote against the resolution, but there were other, more fundamental reasons for the Netherlands -- there will be more fundamental reasons for the Netherlands to do so. The Netherlands has over the years steadfastly supported the promotion of human rights. It takes the fight against the discrimination on the basis of race and ethnic origin, as well as on other grounds, such as sex, color, age, religion or belief, descent, nationality or political conviction or sexual orientation very seriously. Our vote of today does not in any way change that. The Netherlands continues to attach the utmost importance to the fight against racism and discrimination. Now one of the cornerstones of the human rights system is the principle of Non-discrimination. It appears in all the main human rights conventions, and a state should treat all of its citizens equally without discrimination. Our own constitution and equal treatment act enshrine this principle. It is of particular importance to individuals belonging to minorities and others who occupy a vulnerable position in society. The key to protecting these individuals lies in the equality before the law and non-discrimination. The Netherlands considers human dignity, justice, freedom, mutual respect, tolerance and solidarity to be the cornerstones of civilized societies, cornerstones worth fighting for both nationally and internationally. Nationally, we did so by the establishment of a national anti-racism plan in 2003 as a follow-up to the

Durban Conference in 2001, focusing on the prevention of and the fight against discrimination in a rapidly-changing society. Another example is the adoption of an integration policy paper in 2009 that proposes new anti-discrimination measures, such as combatting racial discrimination with the help of anti-discrimination services, the police and the public -- sorry, the public prosecution service, boosting the resilience of victims and the professionalization [sic] of organizations involved in combatting discrimination.

A third example is the intention expressed by the current Dutch government to increase the penalties for violent crimes motivated by discrimination. Internationally, the Netherlands supports activities aimed at promoting the worldwide protection of ethnic, religious and other minorities and opposing discrimination of any kind, wherever it may occur. Through direct support of the anti-discrimination units of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Netherlands assists countries in the preparation of national action plans against racism and supports organizations worldwide in the fight against discrimination and racism. Also the Netherlands is one of the supporters also financially of the permanent memorial in the honor of the memory of the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic slave trade, which will be erected in the near future hopefully at the UN quarters -- headquarters.

Mr. Chairman, the fight against racism and discrimination is of such importance that we cannot support any effort to redirect our attention towards different agendas. Unfortunately, the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, as well as the Durban Review Conference did so to a certain degree by elevating the protection of religion above the protection and promotion of human rights and by placing unnecessary restrictions on the freedom of expression by ignoring discrimination based on sexual orientation and by implicitly singling out one country. It is for these reasons that the Netherlands has not been able to lend its support to a resolution that expresses unconditional support for the review conference and declarations.

Mr. Chairman, to conclude, I would like to underline our willingness to fulfill our international obligations by stepping up our work. The Netherlands has taken some big steps in fighting racism and racial discrimination both in policy and legislation, and will remain fully committed to this fight.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to kindly request that this statement is included in the official records. Thank you.