

**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, on Agenda Item 107: Elimination of Racism and, Racial Discrimination**

**Mr. Chairman,**

Since this is the first time I am taking floor in this Committee, allow me to extend my felicitation to you on your election to preside over the important Committee. I also wish to congratulate other members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

2. The Pakistan delegation associates itself with the statement made on this item by the Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. Chairman,**

3. The World Conference against Racism held last year demonstrated a renewed commitment to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We confronted our past of division and discrimination, and drawing lessons from it, attempted to design a cooperative and peaceful future course. It was the hope of all our peoples that the Conference would help to mitigate the plight of millions afflicted by various forms and manifestation of racism.

4. Although some sincere work has been done towards the implementation of the outcome at Durban, the conditions, a year later, of those suffering from racism and racial discrimination, in its various forms and manifestations, have not improved. Instead, these conditions may have deteriorated further. We endorse the conclusions of the Secretary General's report A/57/204. We agree that combating racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance requires conviction, consistency, perseverance and determination.

**Mr. Chairman,**

5. The Secretary General's report (A/57/204) has cited a resurgence of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in various parts of the world. Ethnic and religious minorities, economic migrants and refugees, in particular from Africa, Asia and the Arab world, are visibly subjected to racial and religious profiling and acts of intolerance. Such behavioural change in some traditionally tolerant societies is reflected and reinforced by the rise of nationalist anti-immigrant political parties.

6. We endorse the Secretary General's call for an in depth study to analyze, in a holistic perspective, the causes of the migratory phenomenon and to examine the "human dimension" of globalization. Migrants move mainly because of poverty at home; often they face prejudice and discrimination where they go. Too frequently, they become the scapegoats for the social and economic problems of their host countries, segregated in ghettos; the first to be suspected of crimes; susceptible to police abuse and brutality.

7. In accordance with the norms of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other UN human rights instruments, the peaceful integration of immigrant communities is the obligation of the receiving countries. Such integration should not be at the cost of suppressing the separate cultural or religious identity of the migrants.

**Mr. Chairman,**

8. The defamation of Islam, and discrimination against Muslims, represents the most notable demonstration of contemporary racism and intolerance. The recent proliferation of blasphemous remarks by certain religious leaders and other personalities attacking Islam and the Holy Prophet (PBUH), are clear manifestations of religious bigotry and demagoguery. It is unfortunate that the world media -- proclaiming the premise of free speech -- has so callously allowed such defamation and blasphemy to be disseminated against our religion. And, unfortunately, the voice of the usually vocal defenders of religious tolerance and non-discrimination -- the United Nations, the human rights officials and mechanisms as well as liberal politicians -- has been deafening in its silence. Partly as a reaction, prejudice against the West has also risen at the popular level in a number of Muslim countries. The people of the world must not succumb to the conspiracies of those who desire to provoke a clash of civilizations and cultures.

**Mr. Chairman,**

9. The World Conference has recognized Islamophobia as a structural form of racism. Islamic peoples and communities are facing such manifestations of racism in many parts of the world. Those defaming a religion, through bigoted words or actions, desecrating religious sites and insulting revered religious personalities, should be denounced unequivocally. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, stereotyping, racial profiling, and hatemongering in all forms, shapes and manifestation must be opposed at the national and international level. Hate must be stamped out with the same zeal with which the fight against terrorism is being pursued.

10. We should strive to remove misunderstandings between societies; and promote understanding of each other's values. Religious and cultural diversity in the globalizing world needs to be used as a vehicle for complimentary creativity and dynamism, not as a rationale for a new ideological and political confrontation.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, in his address to the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly, has proposed that, as a first step in promoting harmony and mutual understanding, the General Assembly should consider the adoption of a Declaration on Religious and Cultural Understanding, Harmony and Cooperation. We hope that the General Assembly will respond positively to this proposal at its current session.

**Mr. Chairman,**

12. While new manifestations of racism are rising in some parts of the world, several age-old practices and institutions of racism -- most prominently, the caste system in our eastern neighbour -- remain to be addressed and opposed openly and systematically. As the 2002 Human Rights Watch Report observes, at Durban, "...the Indian government... maintained that caste discrimination was an internal matter and used its political and economic leverage to censor any mention of caste in WCAR documents." The omission of the caste system -- a system of multiple apartheid which affects hundreds of millions of Dalits and other "lower" -- caste Hindus -- is a gaping hole in the world community's endeavour to eradicate racism.

**Mr. Chairman,**

13. Encouraged by the impunity it appears to enjoy from international criticism, Hindu fundamentalism -- of which the caste system is but one manifestation -- has been gaining strength, with alarming manifestations and implications for our region and for the world. The philosophy and practice of the Hindu extremist parties ruling in New Delhi -- the BJP and its fascist allies, the VHP, the RSS, the Shiv Sena -- call for institutionalized discrimination and

suppression of non-Hindus – Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and others. Since 1947, there have been 150,000 communal riots in India -- 3,000 riots each year. And, the graph of Hindu violence is rising.

14. In February this year, over 2000 innocent Muslim men, women and children were killed mercilessly by mobs in Gujarat. Entire neighbourhoods were put to the torch. Women were systematically raped. Pregnant women killed in cold blood. Babies cut into pieces. This pogrom was organized with the complicity of the Gujarat Chief Minister and his Government. Human Rights Watch, in its special report on the Gujarat massacre, stated:

"... the attacks on Muslims throughout the state were planned well in advance (of the Godhra incident), and organized with extensive police participation and in close cooperation with officials of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state government."

15. Instead of demonstrating any remorse, the Gujarat Chief Minister remains defiant. Three days ago addressing a crowd of 2000 Hindu fanatics, he said "Hindu militancy ... will wipe Pakistan off the world map".

**Mr. Chairman,**

16. There has been no accountability for the act of genocide against the Muslims of Gujarat. Instead, there was a cover-up by New Delhi. The Indian Prime Minister sought to blame Muslims for being troublemakers "wherever they live in the world". Since the national government is unwilling to prosecute the BJP officials, the Gujarat Chief Minister and others complicit in the Muslim slaughter, should be charged and tried by an international tribunal for the crime of genocide, under Genocide Convention, and for gross violations of other human rights instruments. Unless such resolute action is taken by the international community, India's Hindu fanatics will continue to wage their war of hate, violence, discrimination and elimination against the Muslims and other minorities. A week ago, Bal Thackeray, head of Shiv Sena, urged Hindus to form "suicide squads" to kill Muslims. The world can no longer remain a silent spectator to the danger of approaching genocide against the Muslims of India.

**I thank you Mr. Chairman.**