



Durban Review Conference* Talking Points

What do we want?

1. We are calling on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to lead the engagement of the United States in the Durban Review Conference (April 20-24, 2009) as a full participant. Time is of the essence, and we would like to see the Administration engaged in time to attend the next official meeting in preparation for the conference on February 16-19, 2009 in Geneva. The February meeting will continue the negotiations on the text that will become the draft outcome document of the Durban Review Conference.

Why do we want the Obama Administration to participate in the Durban Review Conference?

1. As citizens and residents of the United States, we see active engagement in the Durban Review Conference as integral to our struggle to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by all people irrespective of race, ethnicity or national origin. The aim of the Durban Review Conference is to assess and advance the implementation of the measures established in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, which was adopted by consensus by the official World Conference Against Racism and remains the most important framework to date for combating racism and racial discrimination. The Durban Declaration and Program of Action includes comprehensive measures to combat racism in all its manifestations through stronger anti-discrimination legislation and administrative measures; better education; access to health and administration of justice; as well as improved remedies and resources.
2. The United States has a valuable contribution to make in shaping the outcome of the conference and a decision not to participate would simply limit dialogue, and run contrary to the Obama Administration's emphasis on open dialogue and diplomacy. A decision not to participate would also squander an opportunity to demonstrate the United States' willingness to lead by positive example in the global struggle to eradicate racism and racial discrimination. Participating in the Durban Review Conference will go a long way in repairing the reputation and standing of the United States in the international community and in reaffirming our leadership and support for human rights and democracy. We must participate and not disengage.
3. With the world financial and economic crisis, existing inequalities and exclusion will only be exacerbated and we need the full engagement of the global community in ensuring that the human rights of all persons particularly groups most vulnerable to racial discrimination and intolerance are protected.

**Please refer to the conference by its official name: the Durban Review Conference.*



But what about the claim that the Durban Review Conference* is anti-Semitic?

1. This is not true. The goal of the Durban Review Conference is to assess implementation of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, which consists of 341 paragraphs and was agreed to by all countries present at the end of the 2001 conference. Only 6 of those paragraphs refer to the Middle East, anti-Semitism and directly related issues. These statements squarely condemn anti-Semitism and related forms of bias. The first of those six paragraphs recalls that the Holocaust must never be forgotten, and the second paragraph recognizes deep concern in the increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in various parts of the world. The other four paragraphs refer to “the plight of the Palestinian people” and “the right to security for all States in the region, including Israel,” as well as call upon “Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom.” This language is not anti-Semitic but rather a recognition of the universality of human rights from which no country can legitimately claim to be exempt from respecting, protecting and fulfilling basic and fundamental human rights and freedom.

Is the Preparatory Process for Durban Review Conference controlled by Iran, Libya, and Cuba?

1. This is a misleading statement. It is true that Libya is chairing the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the conference and that Cuba and Iran are among the 20 vice-chairs. However, there are 20 countries on the chairing committee and other vice-chairs include Belgium, Greece, Norway, Croatia, South Africa, India, and Argentina, elected on the basis of regional groupings. Chairs and vice-chairs of such inter-governmental bodies fulfill an essentially functional role and do not have authority to steer the process towards an outcome that is contrary to the will of other countries. This is why engagement is so important. All governments have imperfect records on human rights and the countries chairing are no exception. We encourage the Obama Administration to view the conference as an opportunity to engage these governments in open dialogue and to ensure that the Durban Review Conference remains centered on fulfilling the commitments of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.

**Please refer to the conference by its official name: the Durban Review Conference. Please do not refer to it as Durban II as this term has been seized by those urging a boycott of the conference to suggest that it is a repeat of the first conference in Durban.*

If you would like more information about this document, please contact the Human Rights Project at the Urban Justice Center, 646-602-5628 or www.hrpujc.org/contact.html. Additional information on the Conference can be accessed at: <http://www.un.org/durbanreview2009/index.shtml>