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STATEMENT

by

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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

on

BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
(CARICOM)

to

THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

on

ITEM 107 (a) ON ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
and
107 (b) ON COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE
DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

at

THE 57th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, October 24, 2002

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Mr. Chairman,

have the honour to address you on agenda items 107 (a) on *Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination*, and 107 (b) on *Comprehensive Implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action*. I speak on behalf of the fourteen Member States of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations, namely the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country Antigua and Barbuda. CARICOM Member States pledge their full support to you and likewise to the other members of the bureau. We are most pleased with the effective guidance of your chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM States regard the issues of racism and racial discrimination with particular attentiveness and deep historical significance, emerging as we did from centuries of exploitative colonialism, characterised by the inhumane conditions of slavery and indentureship, based in large part on systematic and systemic racial discrimination. These conditions were based on the most barbarous exploitation of the human being, most certainly a crime against humanity that was always considered as such by those who were enslaved - and by their descendants. In fact, the Caribbean developed as the first society in which enslaved Africans became the majority in many of its member states, following the demise of the indigenous populations and in the process, wealth-generating societies were created for the profit of the colonizers that were sustained on the basis of chattel slavery and indentureship.

We take some solace in the fact that current manifestations of racism and racial discrimination are not naturally instinctive reactions of the human being, but rather a social, cultural and political phenomenon born of wars, military conquests, slavery, indentureship among other factors. But we also recognize the present inequitable social and economic conditions caused, in large part, by these historical wrongs, and endorse initiatives to address these persistent inequities, through vehicles such as meaningful and speedy debt relief, initiatives such as the

New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and other enterprises under continual discussion and debate by some governments and much of civil society.

Mr. Chairman

It is this objective analysis of history and the quest for a future no longer tolerant of the evils of racism and racial discrimination which motivated the international community to convene the historic *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* in Durban, South Africa in 2001, and to adopt the important *Durban Declaration and Programme of Action* which set forth concrete recommendations for the international community to follow to successfully eradicate these scourges from the face of our planet. We would have hoped that the racism of old - with which we in the Caribbean are all too familiar, and which we have opposed at great human cost - would have been a diminished and insignificant force by this Third Millennium.

No doubt, due to the extensive discussions on these sometimes difficult issues, the 56th Session of the General Assembly adopted its resolutions on these agenda items only at the end of March of this year. CARICOM Member States were active in those deliberations, and intend to be consistent in our efforts to implement - and to influence others to undertake - the actions called for in the mandates adopted in Durban, and the confirmation of those recommendations by the General Assembly last March. In this connection, CARICOM States fully support the provisions contained in Resolution 56/265 of 27 March 2002 on the *Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination* which recognised the need for adequate support and financial resources for the Third Decade and its programme of action, and which called on the United Nations, governments, civil society and other stakeholders to contribute fully to the implementation of the programme. CARICOM also fully concurs with Resolution 56/266 of 27 March 2002 on the *Comprehensive Implementation of and follow-up to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* which endorsed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and which called for intense follow-up activity in furtherance of the consensus achieved at Durban. Similarly, we support the important provisions of Resolution 56/267 on "*Measures to combat contemporary forms of racism and racial*

discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance,” in particular those which call for implementation or strengthening of national legislation and administrative measures that expressly and specifically counter racism and xenophobia, provisions which welcome consultations on combating the misuse of the internet for racist purposes, and measures which urge States to eliminate the phenomena known as racial profiling.

Accordingly, in implementation of the mandate, CARICOM was a strong advocate of the establishment of the anti-discrimination unit, based in the *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, to implement measures contained in the *Programme of Action of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination*, and to facilitate implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We are heartened to learn of the plans of other organisations of the United Nations system to act, in earnest, to undertake activities in furtherance of the Durban mandates. In this connection, we applaud the efforts of UNESCO to reflect follow-up activities to the Durban Conference in its *Medium Term Strategy for 2002 - 2007*. CARICOM also welcomes the adoption by UNESCO on November 2001 of its resolution entitled *Proclamation of 2004 as International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition* in which it invites the General Assembly of the United Nations to proclaim the year 2004: International year to commemorate the struggle against slavery and its abolition. We fully support this invitation of UNESCO considering that 2004 will mark the two hundredth anniversary of the first State, Haiti, to be created in the wake of the overthrow of the slave system and also considering that the Haitian revolution of 1804 symbolizes the triumph of the principles of liberty, equality, dignity and the rights of the individual, and that it marked the history of the liberation of the peoples and the emergence of the States of the Americas and the Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman,

UNESCO's historic role in these issues is well known, in particularly the successful *Slave Route Project* which endeavors to break the deafening silence surrounding the emotional issue of the Atlantic Slave trade through public review of scientific knowledge about this most difficult period in world history. Similarly, CARICOM also congratulates UNESCO for the

convening last March, in conjunction with the University of Geneva, of the expert seminar on reparations. Projected activities of the *International Labour Organisation (ILO)*, the *World Health Organisation (WHO)*, and the *United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, as outlined in the Secretary-General's Report, are also indicative of the seriousness with which much of the United Nations system regards their mandate in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

Of particular note in implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was the convening last July in Mexico City of the *Latin America - Caribbean Regional Expert Seminar* which was organised as an exchange of ideas on how to move forward to implement in the Latin American and Caribbean region the letter and spirit of the decisions of Durban. In this regard, the seminar called for governments of the hemisphere to draw up and carry out national plans of action, the execution of which would be entrusted to broadly representative institutions or national commissions. The experts also recommended governments adopt national policies, beginning with extensive consultations with the population groups concerned, to combat racial discrimination. The scholars advocated that national, regional and United Nations agencies establish information systems for the purpose of gathering official statistics for development purposes in all countries in the region so as to reveal the presence of communities of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Mexico seminar further urged the establishment, under the coordination of the *U.N. Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)*, of a specific programme of coordinated research, in conjunction with regional institutions, to address these issues. In this vein, the experts recommended that the *Inter American Commission on Human Rights* create a position of Special Rapporteur on matters related to peoples of African descent. Simultaneously, there is a CARICOM initiative in which the University of the West Indies and the University of Suriname are participating in the study and to document the history of the indentureship of Indians in the Caribbean.

With respect to indigenous rights, the experts urged States to redouble their efforts to ensure that the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is approved before the close of the *International Decade of the World's Indigenous People* in 2004, and called on the

Commission on Human Rights to set up ad hoc commissions of legal experts, legislators, social scientists, indigenous representatives and human rights organisations to review and evaluate the legal system governing relations between indigenous people and States.

An important conclusion of the Latin American and Caribbean experts group meeting called for States to ensure that their national action plans emphasize the need to combat racism within the criminal justice system, with specialised human rights training for criminal justice personnel made available. The establishment of public awareness campaigns with the aim of combating prejudice that leads to racial discrimination, and the institution of programmes to eradicate gender and race-related stigmata and stereotypes from the teaching materials used by educational systems were other important recommendations from the Mexico seminar.

CARICOM takes note of these conclusions which have emanated from one of the early follow-up activities to foster the development of strategies for implementation of the Durban consensus in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this connection, we recall Chapter 9 of the *Inter American Democratic Charter*, adopted by the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 2001, which noted that “*the elimination of all forms of discrimination... in the Americas contribute(s) to strengthening democracy and citizen participation,*” and we further recall OAS Resolution 1905 of 4th June 2002 on the *Prevention of Racism and all forms of Discrimination and Intolerance and Consideration of the Preparation of an Inter-American Draft Convention*.

Mr. Chairman,

The corresponding *Seminar of Experts for the African Region* held in Nairobi, Kenya one month ago served as another critical contribution to charting “the way forward” in implementation of the decisions taken at Durban. As in the Latin American and Caribbean seminar, the experts considered a range of issues and followed up with key recommendations to be undertaken at the national, regional and international levels.

Of particular note was the reference to the significance of NEPAD and the *World Solidarity Fund* in the eradication of poverty as appropriate remedial measures called for in the

Durban plan of action. The Kenya Seminar also made the crucial connections between the elimination of racism and its associated ills, and the achievement of development, accountable governance, and poverty elimination. The experts also made critical linkages between threats from globalisation policies and the direct increase in the number of people and communities facing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, poverty, and marginalisation.

These two regional follow-up activities are clear indications that the international community is working diligently to integrate the important policies adopted in Durban into national and international decision-making processes. CARICOM would emphasize that this momentum must continue, and indeed be accelerated if we are to abolish from our planet the affliction of racism in all its forms, manifestations and illusions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.