



STATEMENT BY MR. SHATRUGHAN SNHA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND  
MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 65 ELEMINATIONOF  
RACISCM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND AGENDA ITEM 66: RIGHT OF  
PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 61<sup>ST</sup>  
SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 07, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the Secretary-General for his report under the Agenda Item 65 'Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination'. We also thank Mr. Doudou Diene, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination and related Intolerance, and Mrs. Amada Benavides, Chairperson of the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a means of impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, for their introductory statements. My delegation associates itself with the statement made under the Agenda Item 65 by the distinguished representative of South Africa, as the Chairman of the Group of 77.

The report of the Secretary-General concludes that despite taking important steps both at international and national levels to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, much more remains to be done. The Special Rapporteur's findings of an alarming retreat in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia is a matter of concern. In this connection, my delegation feels that implementation of the commitments made in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action with a strong resolve is of key importance to foster social harmony benefiting all.

Mr. Chairman,

As we work towards a world free of the racial prejudices of the past, we must especially guard against new manifestations of racial intolerance. We continue to witness instances of destruction of constitutional order to promote

policies based on racial or ethnic discrimination. The battle against racism has to be fought within societies in each nation so as to change thought-processes and attitudes. In addition to international efforts, action by States for the promulgation of stringent national laws, their strict implementation, and the setting up of independent national institutions with powers to address manifestations of racism, needs heightened attention. The Special Rapporteur's call to promote the link between the struggle against racism and xenophobia and the recognition and promotion of multiculturalism needs to be explored further.

The commitment of India to the elimination of racism is well recognised. The contribution of our great leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, to the fight against racism is significant, historic and memorable. It was, therefore, natural that at independence, adequate safeguards were built into the Indian constitution and the Indian Penal Code against dissemination of ideas that promote disharmony in the country. The Constitution of India, in Article 15, expressly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race and this constitutional guarantee is vigorously implemented. In addition, an energetic and committed non-governmental sector in India provides necessary support for eliminating all forms of discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

India has played a leading role in the struggle for decolonisation, and was at the forefront of the movement to secure the right of peoples to self-determination so that those under alien subjugation, domination and exploitation could freely determine their own political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Today, Palestine remains the unfinished task in the realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination. India has maintained unwavering support and solidarity for the people of Palestine to attain their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination. This has been a central feature of India's foreign policy since even before it achieved independence. We believe that there can be no military solution to the Palestinian issue. India has joined the international community in voicing its concern over the endless cycle of violence and counter-violence that has characterised the current phase of this conflict. India has maintained consistently that violence was a serious impediment to the peace process, and that the solution did not lie in more violence but in pursuing the path of political dialogue.

At this juncture, it is critical for the international community, in particular the Middle East Quartet to work closely with the parties with a view to help realise the dream of the peoples of Palestine and Israel to live in peace, side by side, within recognised and secure borders, thus realising the right to self-

determination of the Palestinian people. In this context, we would like to underline the need for the international community to exercise due vigilance in ensuring that the legitimate freedom struggle of the Palestinian people is not undermined by equating terrorist activities with the struggle of the people of Palestine.

Self-determination has long been recognised as the right of peoples of non-self governing colonies and trust territories to independence and self-government. Attempts continue to be made at the United Nations and elsewhere to reinvent some of the basic principles of the Charter, such as self-determination, and to apply them selectively for narrow political ends. Those who do so would do well to realise that such a reinterpretation may sweep their own countries into its vortex.

No right, including the right to self-determination, may be used as an instrument to promote subversion and erode the political cohesion or territorial integrity of Member States of the UN. The right to self-determination cannot be abused to encourage secessionism and undermine pluralistic, democratic states. Moreover, there is no room for self-determination to be distorted and misinterpreted as a right of a group, on the basis of ethnicity, religion or racial criteria, or any other such categorization, and use it to attempt to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Ethnic or religious segregation and chauvinism cannot be legitimised on the ground that societies need to be constituted on homogenous lines before they can be tolerant towards diversity and accept multi-culturalism. Such a view will only aid forces of narrow chauvinism and ethnic, religious and racial exclusivity.

The reference to the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir in the statement made by the delegate of Pakistan earlier today is irrelevant to the deliberations in this forum, which is meant to focus on the right of peoples to self-determination.

It would suffice to point out that the people of Jammu and Kashmir exercised their right of self determination at the time of India's independence and have since then repeatedly participated in free, fair and open elections at all levels. In contrast, Pakistan continued to deny such opportunities to its own people and those in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

By its references earlier today the delegation of Pakistan is trying to divide the ranks of those who support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It will not succeed in its efforts.

On our part, we are convinced that bilateral issues should be resolved bilaterally. India and Pakistan are discussing a whole range of issues in the

framework of the bilateral composite dialogue. We look forward to improved relations between our two countries.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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