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**Statement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
The sixty -six Session of the General Assembly**

High- Level Meeting of the General Assembly to
commemorate the tenth anniversary of
the adoption of the Durban Declaration and
Programme of Action

By:

H.R.H. Prince

Dr. Torki bin Mohamed bin Saud Al Kabeer
Undersecretary for Multi Relations Affairs

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Excellency, Chairman of the Meeting
Excellency, President of the United Nations General Assembly
Excellencies, Honorable Heads of Delegations
Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to take part in this auspicious occasion where we celebrate the 10th anniversary of adopting the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. I would like to take this opportunity to laud the valuable contributions to the organization of this meeting and in particular those of the President of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban ki-moon, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mrs. Navanethem Pillay.

Organizing this high level meeting is an extension of the international efforts dedicated to the holding of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001 where two historic documents were adopted in the realm of confronting racism, racial discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerance. I would also like to refer to the final act Document emanating from the Durban review Conference in 2009 which emphasized the significance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen

This meeting is convened after 10 years of holding the Durban conference at a time when the world is still suffering from the rising patterns of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in many countries. In recent times, many regrettable events and phenomena have taken place where many innocent victims suffered, places of worship were destroyed, and the sanctity of many holy and religious symbols was desecrated. A great number of racist movements and organizations

came to the forefront in a number of states in response to calls of racial and ethnic superiority and discrimination along with dreaded bigotry and xenophobia thus negatively impacting social structures and coexistence among segments of the society. Undoubtedly, governments before other entities, should be entrusted with undertaking all steps and measures to identify the causes and sources of such phenomena and to exert intensive national and international efforts to deal with it.

The government of Saudi Arabia hopes to benefit from convening such conferences and meetings in order to propel and strengthen international endeavors that spread the cultures of dialogue, tolerance, and peace at all levels, and to eradicate the causes of tension emanating from discrimination, religious and ethnic bias among nations and peoples.

Mr. Chairman
Ladies and Gentlemen

The increased tempo of hatred and intolerance against religions overall, the continuation of negative stereotyping of Islam, and the dissemination of enmity and hatred against Moslems in particular in many states, represent a great concern for us. Freedom of speech should never be used as a tool for injustice and the spread of hatred and hostility against some societal segments.

The continuity of what became known as Islamophobia and the accompanying regrettable racial incidents such as burning of the holy Quran, and continued hate campaigns against the Islamic religion and Islamic symbols where the Prophet Muhammad is at the forefront, dictates that we muster national and international efforts to propagate tolerance and peace, and to work on promoting awareness of the dangers of discrimination and hatred amongst individuals and societies. We would like to stress at this juncture that our position in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emanates from our Islamic religion which dictates respect and reverence to all celestial religions, messengers and prophets. Islam

calls upon us to refrain from offending other religions and faiths. We reiterate our call, through this meeting, to the significance of addressing these issues in accordance with paragraph 150 of the Durban Action Programme.

Mr. Chairman
Ladies and Gentlemen

The position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with regard to opposing racism and racial discrimination is founded on Islamic Sharia which affirms the dignity of human beings regardless of race, color or ethnicity. The Sharia calls for the realization of equality and justice among humankind since they were born alike, and for respect to cultural and religious diversity. The Kingdom enacted several national legislation that aim at safeguarding such noble values and prohibit racism and racial discrimination. Foremost amongst such legislation are the Basic Law of Government, the Law of the Judiciary and the Labor law. The law of printed Material and Publications incorporate many legal standards that prohibit the establishment of organizations that calls for racism and bigotry. The rules also criminalize the financing of any racist activities and the issuance of publications and materials that incite hatred. The rules are in conformity with the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other international agreements and instruments which Saudi Arabia acceded thereto.

At the national level also, the Kingdom established a number of agencies that call for the spread of human rights culture, the culture of tolerance, dialogue, and the elimination of racism and prejudice in particular. One of the prominent entities in this regard is the Center for National Dialogue which represented an efficient cultural and training mechanism to consolidate purposeful dialogue that aims at rejecting discrimination and promoting tolerance and peace in the society. Through a multitude of meetings and forums at the Center, over 800, 000 participants benefitted from such activities that were dedicated to

the deepening of dialogue among all segments of the Saudi Society. They discussed significant national issues including those pertaining to racism and discrimination and submitted views and proposals and suggested appropriate solutions in many cases. The meetings and outcomes reflected an inherent respect to cultural and religious diversity, and to the national identity and unity of Saudi Arabia. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz affirmed that the Center will serve as a venue for responsible manifestation of views and would have a tangible impact upon elimination of racism, excessiveness, and extremism.

At the international level, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques launched his well known initiative for a dialogue between followers of the different religions and cultures. The initiative aimed, among other things, at reflecting the Kingdom's desire for peaceful coexistence, and for the rejection of racial discrimination and prejudice. It also manifested the intention to promote international efforts striving to build civilized interactions amongst nations and peoples without enmity, hatred or discrimination. In connection with this initiative, a number of major conferences were held, foremost among them, were the conferences of Makkah, Madrid. A conference in New York was also held within the framework of the UN General Assembly during 2008. I would like to signify at this point, that work is currently underway to finalize arrangements to establish the Global Center for Dialogue Among Followers of Religions and Cultures in Vienna-Austria. The center will launch a comprehensive program for dialogue in support of the principles of coexistence, tolerance and peace. Also, I would like to announce that a the sum of 10, 000 \$ will be donated as a contribution from the Kingdom to the building of a memorial commemorating the victims of slavery and slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean.

Mr. Chairman
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the time when we feel with the suffering of some segments in different societies, as a result of racism and discrimination, we believe that racial discrimination against a whole people, and depriving them of their inherent right for self-determination, in addition to attempts to eradicate their religious and cultural identity, represent the highest degree of racism and discrimination. Such a fact has negative and dangerous consequences that threaten not only the targeted people, but also the international peace and security. Undoubtedly, the clearest illustration of such comprehensive racial discrimination lies heavily before us against the Palestinian people today. The Palestinians has been subjected to all forms of racial, political, socio-economic, and religious discrimination. The striking evidence of these aspects is manifested in the policies and measures that were adopted by Israel in Palestine. Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territories, deprive the Palestinians of their legitimate rights, foremost among them their right for self-determination, evict them from their lands, building the racial separation wall, implement a continuous and consistent policy of confiscating property, and razing of religious and archeological sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the occupied lands, in order to wipe out the national and cultural identity of the Palestinian people.

Finally, I hope that the short, and brief political declaration to be issued upon the conclusion of this meeting will be accepted, and that it will reflect the concerns of the participants, in the cause of promoting international efforts against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, and in conformity with what was depicted in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Thank you