The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

Statement by
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Permanent Representative

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The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations
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Mr./Madam Chair,
Let me first turn to the issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance before discussing the right to self-determination.

Mr./Madam Chair,
Although much has been accomplished, none of our societies is completely free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or related intolerance. These human rights issues concern all of us and must be fought with conviction and commitment at the global, regional and national level. In this regard it is essential to work towards the universal adherence and full implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Racism (CERD) and we urge all States, who have not yet done so, to become parties to the Convention.

Mr./Madam Chair,
Iceland is staunchly committed to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Icelandic Constitution prohibits discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, and two provisions in the General Penal Code specifically safeguard against such discrimination. In addition, The Penal Code makes it clear that any kind of hate speech against a person or a group of persons based on their nationality, ethnicity, race or religion is not tolerated. Hate speech that violates the human rights of individuals is not protected by free speech.

In this regard I would like to mention that last month, on 11 October, a project to fight against hate speech and racial discrimination was launched in Iceland. The project which is named “No to Hate Speech - Words have Consequences” is part of a larger project launched by the Council of Europe, called “No Hate Speech Movement”. The project’s aim is to promote equality, human rights, respect and diversity. It is specifically aimed at young people to raise their awareness of hate speech and how to fight against it, specifically in relation to modern technology such as the internet.

This timely message is, however, not only aimed at our younger generation. It is of course relevant to all in our society as it is our joint obligation to put an end to hate speech and eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Mr./Madam Chair,
In light of its history, Iceland has been a long standing and strong supporter of the right of peoples to self-determination which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and affirmed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

Accordingly, Iceland reiterates its continued support for the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the application of the State of Palestine for full membership to the United Nations.

Iceland equally supports all efforts undertaken under the auspices of the Secretary-General with a view to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution on Western Sahara, which is long overdue.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair