BANGLADESH

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Statement by
Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Deputy Permanent Representative
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at the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 68th Session of the UNGA
on
'Elimination of racism and racial discrimination' [Agenda item 67].
New York, 05 November 2013

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by thanking the Secretary General and the Special Rapporteur for their reports under this agenda item. My delegation aligns itself with the Statement made by Fiji on behalf of G77 and China.

Mr. Chair,

In 2001, in Durban, we adopted a landmark programme for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The DDPA, as it is known, constitutes the most comprehensive international platform to fight racism and racial discrimination. The Declaration reaffirmed that every human being has the right to a life of dignity and that nobody should be subjected to insult or offence because of his or her race, colour, religion, nationality or origin. This commitments were renewed at the review conference in 2009. Later, in 2011, during the 10th anniversary of the adoption of DDPA, we again proclaimed "strong determination to make the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the protection of the victims a high priority".

While significant progress has been made towards evolving normative standards, time and again we see persistent hatred, intolerance and discrimination. In many parts of the world, racist attitudes and hate speech still persist dwarfing our achievements towards realization of equality and non-discrimination. With the advances of new communication like internet, subtle forms of racism have emerged.

Certain religions have been stereotyped, stigmatized and defamed in many societies exposing the followers to hatred and possible discrimination. Like religious minorities, in many societies, migrants have become special targets of racism and violence. Often host Governments apply discriminatory restrictive rules on the entry of migrants. Authorities also remain apathetic to discrimination in wages, housing, and education, or to incidents of violence against migrants. Anti-discriminatory rules are in place in many host countries, however, implementation in practice is still absent.

Mr. Chair:

We fully agree with the Special Rapporteur on Racism that there is an inextricable link between poverty and racism. Because of discriminatory distribution of resources on the basis of race,
ethnicity and religion, certain groups are trapped into poverty. This in turn fuels hatred among the members of that group and thus impedes construction of a tolerant and inclusive society.

Mr. Chair:

In Bangladesh, the Constitution strictly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, caste, sex or birthplace. While it guarantees equality before law, and of opportunity for all citizens, it also encourages affirmative action for particularly disadvantaged groups. At the global level, we have supported the fight against racist practices and racial intolerance. We are parties to all the major human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. We are resolute in our support to the persecuted communities around the globe in their defense of legitimate rights.

We believe that our efforts in this regard must focus on some critical areas:

Firstly, given the interplay and mutually reinforcing character of racism and poverty, the efforts to eliminate racism have to be undertaken in conjunction with poverty eradication and human development.

Secondly, intercultural dialogue, tolerance and respect for diversity are essential tools for combating racial discrimination and related intolerance. In this regard, education espousing a culture of peace can go a long way in bridging the divides and promoting tolerance and mutual trust.

Thirdly, governments bear primary responsibility in weeding out hatred and intolerance and protecting all within their national boundaries though implementation of national laws. We agree with Special Rapporteur that legislation must be adopted and implemented to stem racist ideologies and practices and prevent advocacy of hatred and intolerance. The sense of impunity for racist crimes must be eliminated through effective and timely prosecution.

Fourthly, while we believe that Freedom of expression is one of the essential elements of democratic and tolerant society, we should also be vigilant so that such freedom is not abused for propagation of racist prejudice or religious intolerance.

Finally, Mr. Chair, globalization has brought peoples, communities and individuals closer than ever before. In this era of deepening interaction and mutual learning among peoples of different origins, combating racism is of utmost importance. No country can fight this scourge alone. We must work concertedly “to build an international order based on inclusion, justice, equality and equity, human dignity, mutual understanding and promotion of and respect for cultural diversity and universal human rights.” Without effective and wide ranging cooperation, the fight against racism will remain a challenge forever.

I thank you Mr. Chair