

Statement by Mrs. Annu Tandon, Member of Parliament and Member of the Indian delegation, on Agenda Item 67: Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance & Item 68 - Right of people to self-determination, during the general discussion at the Third Committee of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 06, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his reports and all other reports presented under these agenda items dealing with racism and racial discrimination and rights of peoples to self-determination.



I also thank the speakers for their presentation and contribution to this important discussion.

India associates itself with the statement of the G-77.

Mr. Chairman,

India is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society. Our civilizational ethos has been underpinned by peaceful coexistence and tolerance, values that Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our Nation, placed at the core of India's national life as he led our struggle for independence.

Mahatma Gandhi had previously experienced the full force of discrimination based on colour during his nearly two decade long stay in South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. Indians too had to contend with the abhorrent facts of racism and racial discrimination under colonial occupation.

Given this background, and very conscious of the destructive impact that racism and racial discrimination can have on society, the leaders of our freedom struggle ensured that the Indian Constitution enshrined the principles of equality and expressly prohibited discrimination on account of race.

These constitutional provisions are anchored in our comprehensive legal framework and vigorously safeguarded at different levels by our democratic,

pluralistic and secular polity, an independent and impartial judiciary, a vibrant civil society and free media.

Mr. Chairman,

The fight against racism and efforts to rid the world of racial discrimination and colonization were, therefore, an important priority of our foreign policy as we gained independence. At the UN, our delegation was actively involved in drafting the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

While the era of colonialism is well behind us, its legacy unfortunately finds continuing expression in the mindset and behaviour of some individuals, fuelling racial hatred, discrimination and xenophobia.

Despite international efforts, there are still manifestations of racial discrimination and intolerance around the world. We share the concern at the increase in the number of racist incidents in several countries.

We would like to reiterate our firm commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and seek to create more effective measures to enhance its effective implementation.

We also need to take effective measures nationally. Promulgation of appropriate laws and their strict implementation and more importantly, ensuring attitudinal change and inculcation of tolerance through appropriate educational strategies would perhaps provide the surest guarantee against racial prejudice, discrimination and xenophobia.

Mr. Chairman,

The right to self-determination is a fundamental right for people of non self-governing territories and trust colonies. This right allows people to freely choose and establish their governance structures.

India's contribution to secure the right of peoples to self-determination and our role in the struggle for decolonization has been momentous and vital in ensuring that people who live under subjugation, domination and exploitation, are afforded the right to freely determine their own political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Mr. Chairman,

Unwavering support for the Palestinian cause has been a cornerstone of India's foreign policy. We received President Mahmoud Abbas in India in September this year. We support their aspirations for enhanced status at the United Nations.

It is imperative that there be an early realization of a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its

capital living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace initiative, Quartet Road map and relevant UN resolutions.

Mr. Chairman,

It must be emphasised here that the right to self-determination cannot be abused for subversive political agendas to encourage secession and to undermine pluralistic and democratic states.

The international community has always agreed that this right cannot be distorted and misinterpreted as extending to component parts or groups based on ethnic, religious, racial or other such narrow lines, to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of state.

Let me add here that ethnic or religious segregation 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 extreme nationalism.

Mr. Chairman,

We totally reject the unwarranted reference made by the delegation of Pakistan to the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which is an integral part of the Union of India.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir have chosen and reaffirmed their destiny repeatedly through India's well established democratic processes. Free, fair and open elections have been regularly held there.

Pakistan's reference to Jammu and Kashmir is a blatant attempt to divert attention from its dismal record of gross and systematic violation of human rights, including in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Pakistan would do well to introspect before casting baseless allegations against India.

We would also urge the delegation of Pakistan to refrain from using this forum to detract from the important cause of the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights to self-determination.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, the task ahead of us remains challenging but we must firmly believe in the goodness of the human race. Equality and peace are fundamental to our existence. Collective and coordinated action at the international, national and local level is essential and must be vigorously pursued.

We should jointly purge the world of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory practices and facilitate the legitimate right of self-determination for nations seeking freedom.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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