

Item 9: Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

**The Human Rights Council – 12th session Statement by the
Delegation of the United States of America Delivered by Sarah
Cleveland**

Geneva, 30 September 2009

Thank you, Mr. President.

I extend my appreciation to Mr. Mugai for his report and for his presence today.

The United States is committed to the fight against discrimination, intolerance, and xenophobia based on race, religion, or otherwise, and we appreciate the consideration of these issues undertaken by the Rapporteur. While we do not support the concept of “defamation of religions” for reasons well known to this Council, my government is strongly committed to religious freedom and has condemned the use of negative and derogatory stereotypes and discrimination and/or discriminatory policies. We recognize that such stereotyping and discrimination affects individuals of all faiths and races, and express our strong condemnation of the types of such intolerance provided in the report.

As the Special Rapporteur noted, we recognize that all religious communities are affected by acts of intolerance and discrimination and believe these instances should be acknowledged and addressed. As we have pledged at the highest levels, we are committed to fighting against such intolerance and discrimination.

The United States shares the view of the Special Rapporteur that these incidents are rooted in intolerance, and that to tackle the root cause of this problem requires a broad set of policy measures, including in the areas of intercultural

dialogue and education. Similarly, as we have learned through our own national experience, the Rapporteur's observation that more speech empowers and gives voice to minorities, educates people about cultural differences, increases acceptance, and is ultimately the strategic response to hate speech was particularly resonant.

As noted in our response to the High Commissioner on the issue of defamation of religion, the United States believes the best way for governments to address the issues underlying intolerance is to develop effective legal regimes to address acts of discrimination and bias-inspired crime; to condemn hateful speech and proactively reach out to all religious communities, especially minority groups. We strive to do this while vigorously defending the freedom of religion and freedom of expression. We would be interested, therefore, to hear more from the Special Rapporteur specifically as to the type of policy measures in the area of intercultural dialogue that he believes can have or have had an effect on combating ignorance and promoting intolerance.

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are serious challenges facing the international community and the United States believes they must be examined methodically and deliberately. The United States submits that this process of self-examination and action by the international community begin with greater opportunities to exchange views and address empirical data and practice on matters related to racial, ethnic, and religious diversity, discrimination, and intolerance – notably through discussions in the Ad Hoc Committee on Complementary Standards – so as to broaden our common understanding of these important issues and provide a solid foundation for a broad-based consensus for further actions and initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. President.