

Durban Review Conference

Press Release: Seretse attends "Durban II" in Geneva The Minister for Defence, Justice and Security, the Hon. Dikgakangamatso Seretse, is in Geneva this week, where he will be heading Botswana's delegation at the United Nations organized "Durban Review Conference" ("Durban II"). The conference, which opens today and is scheduled to close on Friday (24/4/09), has been convened to evaluate progress towards the goals set by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. According to its organizers the Review Conference will serve as a catalyst to fulfilling the promises of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) agreed at the 2001 World Conference through reinvigorated actions, initiatives and practical solutions. It is anticipated that the Conference will provide an opportunity to assess and accelerate progress on implementation of measures adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, including assessment of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), held in Durban, South Africa, was widely seen as a landmark event in the struggle to improve the lives of millions of human beings around the world who are victims of racial discrimination and intolerance. After much debate, the Conference adopted by consensus the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which provides a common framework for guiding governments, non-governmental organizations and other institutions in their efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The DDPA encompasses measures to combat racism in various manifestations, including strengthening education, fighting poverty, securing development, improving the remedies and resources available to victims of racism, and bolstering respect for the rule of law and for human rights. Certain sections of DDPA have, however, been critiqued by a number of western Governments, who have decided against participating in this week's gathering (including Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Netherlands, Sweden and the USA) The decision to convene the Durban Review Conference was made by UN Member States at a General Assembly meeting in 2006 (Resolution A/RES/61/149). The General Assembly requested the UN Human Rights Council to prepare the process and the Human Rights Council therefore constituted a Preparatory Committee of the Conference. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was appointed by the UN Secretary-General to serve as Secretary-General of the Conference and her Office (OHCHR) functions as its Secretariat. Conference Objectives In August 2007, the Preparatory Committee of the Conference set forth the following objectives for this week's Durban Review Conference: a) To review progress and assess implementation of the DDPA by all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels, including assessment of contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, through an inclusive, transparent and collaborative process, and identification of concrete measures and initiatives for combating and eliminating all manifestations of these phenomena; b) To assess the effectiveness of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms and other relevant UN mechanisms dealing with the issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to enhance them; c) To promote the universal ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and proper consideration of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; To identify and share good practices achieved in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It has been the view of the Preparatory Committee have asserted that the Review Conference should be limited to a review of the implementation of the DDPA and should not re-open discussion on issues or introduce new issues.