



The 2009 U.N. Durban Review Conference: Follow-Up to the 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism

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Analyst in International Relations

April 6, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-....

www.crs.gov

RL34754

Summary

In April 2009, U.N. member states will convene in Geneva, Switzerland, for the U.N. Durban Review Conference Against Racism (Review Conference) to examine possible progress made since the 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), held in Durban, South Africa. At WCAR, participating governments, including the United States, sought to recommend ways for the international community to address racism. The United States withdrew from WCAR because of what it viewed as participating governments' disproportionate focus on Israel as a perpetrator of racism and intolerance in the Middle East.

The George W. Bush Administration did not participate in Review Conference preparations and voted against U.N. resolutions supporting or funding the Conference because of concerns that it may repeat the perceived mistakes of WCAR. In February 2009, the Barack Obama Administration announced that it would send a delegation to the Review Conference consultations. Based on its observations, the Administration concluded that it would not participate in further negotiations due primarily to the draft outcome document's focus on Israel. It stated that it remained open to re-engaging in negotiations if a draft document appeared to take a "constructive approach" to addressing racism and discrimination. Canada, Israel, and Italy announced that they will boycott the Review Conference, and other governments announced they will not participate unless it is demonstrated that the Review Conference will not target Israel.

Congressional perspectives on U.S. participation in the Review Conference vary. Some Members of Congress have introduced legislation supporting U.S. participation in the Conference, arguing that the United States should play an active role in combating international racism. Other Members contend that the United States should not participate or fund the Conference because of WCAR's focus on Israel. Specifically, they propose that the United States withhold a proportionate share of its U.N. assessed contributions that fund the Conference. Because assessed contributions finance the U.N. regular budget in its entirety and not specific parts of it, withholding funds in this manner would not affect the Review Conference.

For many, U.S. participation or non-participation in the Review Conference touches on the broader issue of U.S. engagement in the U.N. system. Supporters contend that U.S. participation in U.N. efforts such as the Review Conference is important to the success and credibility of the United Nations as a whole. Opponents maintain that U.S. engagement in the Conference would give undeserved legitimacy to U.N. mechanisms that provide a platform for member states to target Israel.

This report provides information on the 2001 World Conference Against Racism and the circumstances of U.S. withdrawal. It discusses preparations for the Durban Review Conference, including U.S. policy and reaction from other governments. It also highlights possible issues for the 111th Congress, including the Review Conference preparatory process, U.S. funding of the Conference, and the political and diplomatic impact of U.S. engagement. For related information, see CRS Report RL33611, *United Nations System Funding: Congressional Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted). This report will be updated as events warrant.

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Introduction

From April 20 to 24, 2009, United Nations (U.N.) member states will meet in Geneva, Switzerland, for the U.N. Durban Review Conference Against Racism (Review Conference). Some Members of Congress are concerned that the Review Conference will repeat the perceived mistakes of the U.N. World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), which was held in Durban, South Africa, from August 31 to September 7, 2001. At WCAR, participating governments, including the United States, sought to acknowledge and recommend ways for the international community to address racism and related intolerance. The Conference attracted a significant amount of national and international attention because of what many viewed as participating governments' disproportionate focus on Israel as a perpetrator of racism and intolerance in the Middle East. The United States withdrew from WCAR when, in its view, it became clear that governments, particularly members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)¹, would continue to target Israel while contemporary forms of racism remained unaddressed.

In December 2006, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for a Durban Review Conference to assess the implementation of WCAR's main outcome documents—the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. The Bush Administration opposed the Review Conference and did not participate in the preparatory process or voted for U.N. resolutions supporting or funding it.

In February 2009, the Barack Obama Administration decided to participate in Review Conference consultations to observe the current status of negotiations related to the Review Conference outcome document. After attending the consultations and reviewing the draft outcome document, it determined that it would not participate in future negotiations because of the draft document's focus on Israel. The Administration stated that it remained open to re-engaging in negotiations if a draft document appeared to take a "constructive approach" to addressing racism and discrimination.² Other countries, including Canada, Israel, and Italy have announced that they will boycott the Conference, and some governments stated they will not participate unless it is clear that the Conference will not target Israel. In the coming weeks, participating countries will continue to negotiate the Review Conference draft outcome document.

Members of Congress have demonstrated continued interest in the Durban Review Conference. Some Members, for example, are concerned that the United States would fund a U.N. conference that serves as a forum for anti-Semitism. They have proposed legislation that would withhold a proportionate share of U.S. assessed contributions to the U.N. regular budget, which funds the Review Conference. Limiting U.S. contributions to the Review Conference in this manner would have no impact on the Review Conference because assessed contributions finance the U.N. regular budget in its entirety and not specific or separate parts of it. Other Members of Congress have emphasized the importance of combating racism internationally, and have proposed and passed resolutions urging President Obama to engage in diplomatic efforts to ensure that the

¹ The OIC is an intergovernmental group of 57 states with a goal to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world." For more information, see <http://www.oic-oci.org/>.

² Department of State press release, "U.S. Posture Toward the Durban Review Conference and Participation in the U.N. Human Rights Council," February 27, 2009.

Review Conference does not further discredit U.N. efforts to address racism by disproportionately focusing on Israel.³

Members of the 111th Congress will likely consider a number of issues when conducting oversight of the Review Conference and determining appropriate levels of U.S. participation and financial contributions. Some suggest, for example, that ongoing Review Conference preparations indicate that certain U.N. member states will continue to target Israel. Others are concerned about the potential diplomatic or political impact of U.S. participation, or lack thereof. Some, for instance, maintain that the question of U.S. participation in the Review Conference is inherently linked to the larger issue of U.S. participation in international organizations. They are concerned that a selective approach to U.S. engagement in the United Nations may damage the reputation and negotiating influence of the United States both within and outside of the U.N. system. Opponents, however, contend that U.S. participation in the Review Conference contradicts the objectives of the Conference and would provide legitimacy to U.N. mechanisms that allow member states to criticize Israel in the context of racism.

This report provides background information on previous U.N. efforts to address racism and the 2001 World Conference Against Racism. The report also discusses the objectives of the Durban Review Conference, including U.S. policy and responses from other governments. It examines charges of bias against Israel in the preparatory process for the Review Conference, potential implications for U.S. participation or non-participation, and the impact of withholding a proportionate share of U.S. contributions to the Conference from the U.N. regular budget.

Overview of U.N. Activities to Address Racism

The 2001 World Conference Against Racism and the upcoming Durban Review Conference are part of broader U.N. efforts to address racism and racial discrimination.

Previous U.N. Efforts

Since the United Nations was established in 1945, member states have sought to address racism both in the broader context of human rights and as a stand-alone issue. Member states, for instance, incorporated the idea of racial equality into international documents such as the U.N. Charter in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.⁴ Through the 1960s, member states negotiated and ratified international agreements and declarations that addressed the issue. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), for example, requires parties to condemn and work to eliminate discrimination in all of

³ For specific examples of congressional interest in the Review Conference, see the “U.S. Response” under “The 2009 Durban Review Conference” section.

⁴ Article 1 of the U.N. Charter, a treaty, notes the importance of racial equality, stating that the United Nations should “achieve international co-operation in ... promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” The Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, and entered into force on October 24, 1945. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is non-binding, states, “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind ... such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion...” (Article 2). The Declaration was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 10, 1948, with 48 in favor (including the United States), zero against, and eight abstentions.

its forms, regardless of race, sex, language, or religion. The treaty, which entered into force on January 4, 1969, has been ratified or acceded to by 173 U.N. member states. It was ratified by the United States on October 21, 1994.⁵

U.N. member states have also addressed racism through U.N. bodies such as the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the main subsidiary body of the Commission on Human Rights (now the Human Rights Council).⁶ In 1993, the Human Rights Council appointed a Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia to report to U.N. member states on contemporary forms of racism.⁷

In the past three decades, U.N. member states have focused on raising global awareness of racism and taking measures to address the issue through U.N. “Decades Against Racism” and three global anti-racism conferences.⁸ During each Decade Against Racism—1973 to 1982, 1983 to 1992, and 1993 to 2002—participating U.N. member states held world conferences against racism, including the 2001 World Conference in Durban, South Africa.⁹ At each Conference, U.N. member states negotiated programs of action that would be implemented by governments and U.N. specialized agencies, funds, and programs.

Some U.N. member state efforts to address racism in U.N. fora have been controversial. Probably the most notorious effort occurred in 1975, when member states adopted General Assembly resolution 3379, which stated that Zionism is a form a racism and racial discrimination.¹⁰ The United States strongly opposed the resolution, stating that it treated racism not as a serious injustice, but as an “epithet to be flung at whoever [sic] happens to be one’s adversary.”¹¹ Sixteen years later, on December 16, 1991, the General Assembly adopted a resolution to revoke resolution 3379.¹² Despite its repeal, many argue that the adoption of resolution 3379 greatly

⁵ ICERD entered into force for the United States on November 20, 1994. ICERD also establishes a Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to review reports from parties about their implementation of Convention provisions and to examine complaints by parties. The treaty was adopted and opened for signature and ratification by U.N. General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX), December 21, 1965.

⁶ The Sub-Commission was established by the Human Rights Commission during the Commission’s first session in 1946. It was comprised of independent experts who conducted studies and made recommendations to the Commission concerning the prevention of discrimination of any kind relating to human rights and the protections of racial, national, or religious minorities. In 1999, the U.N. Economic and Social Council changed the title to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. When the Human Rights Commission was replaced by the Human Rights Council in 2006, the Sub-Commission was abolished and replaced by the Human Rights Advisory Committee.

⁷ The Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on alleged violations regarding contemporary forms of racism. See <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/rapporteur/index.htm>.

⁸ U.N. member states periodically designate years or decades to highlight special issues, events, or disadvantaged groups, including refugees, the disabled, and women. In 1966, the General Assembly named March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racism Discrimination.

⁹ The First Decade Against Racism focused on measures to implement various U.N. treaties addressing racism and racial discrimination. The First World Conference Against Racism was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1978. The Second Decade Against Racism emphasized recourse procedures for victims of racial discrimination and focused on the elimination of apartheid. At the Second World Conference Against Racism, held in Geneva in 1982, participants reviewed and assessed the activities of the First Decade Against Racism.

¹⁰ U.N. document A/RES/3379 (XXX), November 10, 1975. The resolution passed with a vote of 72 in favor and 35 against, 32 abstentions, and three absent.

¹¹ “U.S. Participation in the United Nations, Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1975,” Department of State, p. 213.

¹² U.N. document, A/RES/46/86, December 16, 1991, 111 in favor, 25 against, and 13 abstentions.

diminished the credibility of U.N. efforts to address racism and had a lasting and adverse effect on relations among U.N. member states—particularly among Israel and other Middle Eastern countries.¹³

U.S. Role

The United States did not participate in the 1978 and 1985 World Conferences Against Racism because of its strong opposition to resolution 3379.¹⁴ The Bush Administration decided, however, to participate in the 2001 World Conference Against Racism—in large part because of the 1991 General Assembly decision to revoke resolution 3379.

Congressional response to U.N. efforts to address racism has varied over time. Members have supported U.N. mechanisms that address racism, such as ICERD.¹⁵ On the other hand, Congress has condemned the efforts of some U.N. member states to address racism that appear to target Israel. Many Members were particularly critical of General Assembly resolution 3379 and adopted a joint resolution condemning its passage.¹⁶ Members also generally agreed with the U.S. decisions not to participate in the first two U.N. Decades Against Racism and first two World Conferences Against Racism.¹⁷

The 2001 World Conference Against Racism

The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR or the Conference) was held in Durban, South Africa, from August 31 to September 7, 2001. Conference objectives included (1) reviewing progress made in the fight against racism, xenophobia, and intolerance; (2) increasing the level of awareness about racism; and (3) recommending ways to increase U.N. effectiveness through programs that combat racism and related intolerance. Conference participants also aimed to recommend ways to improve regional, national, and international measures to combat racism, and ensure that the United Nations had the resources to combat racism.¹⁸ Unlike previous World Conferences that focused primarily on racism and racial discrimination, WCAR also addressed issues related to xenophobia and related intolerance.

¹³ Then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan called resolution 3379 a “low point” in Israel’s relationship with the United Nations, stating that the “negative resonance [of the resolution] ... is difficult to overestimate,” U.N. press release SG/SM/6504/Rev.1, March 25, 1998.

¹⁴ *U.S. Participation in the United Nations, Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1977*, Department of State, p. 172.

¹⁵ On May 25, 1994, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations favorably reported ICERD to the full Senate (S. Exec. Rept. 103-29), and on June 24, 1994, the Senate provided advice and consent to U.S. ratification.

¹⁶ P.L. 99-90, August 15, 1985 (S.J.Res. 98), “A joint resolution condemning the passage of Resolution 3379 in the United Nations General Assembly ... and urging the United States Ambassador and United States Delegation to take all appropriate actions necessary to erase this shameful resolution from the record of the United Nations.”

¹⁷ See S.Con.Res. 73 (94th Congress), “Resolution relating to the United Nations and Zionism,” passed by the Senate on November 12, 1975; and H.Con.Res.73 (94th Congress), “Resolution relating to the United Nations and Zionism,” passed on November 12, 1975.

¹⁸ Drawn from U.N. document, A/RES/52/111, December 12, 1997. For more information on Conference objectives, see <http://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/background1.htm>.

The U.N. General Assembly designated the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (now the Human Rights Council) as the Conference preparatory committee,¹⁹ and directed that the Conference secretariat operate out of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).²⁰ Participation was open to representatives from all U.N. member states, U.N. bodies and programs, regional organizations and commissions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations.²¹ Approximately 2,300 representatives from 163 countries attended WCAR, and nearly 4,000 NGO representatives were accredited. The Conference was funded through the U.N. regular budget and voluntary contributions from U.N. member states.

To prepare for WCAR, participating governments held a number of regional and organizational meetings where they made decisions related to the scope and agenda of the Conference.²² At the regional sessions, for example, governments drafted Declarations and Programs of Action for their regions. At the second session of the Preparatory Committee, held in May 2001, governments established a working group of 21 states (Group of 21), which included the United States.²³ The group synthesized the outcome documents from regional meetings into the draft Declaration and Program of Action (hereafter “outcome documents”) that was considered at the Conference. Though the outcome documents were non-binding, many countries considered them crucial to the success of WCAR because they provided international guidance and credibility for governments and organizations aiming to combat racism.

Bush Administration Position on WCAR

Initially, the United States supported the World Conference on Racism. In December 1997, the Clinton Administration co-sponsored the U.N. General Assembly resolution that decided to convene the Conference²⁴ and established an interagency Task Force (WCAR Task Force) to coordinate U.S. participation in the Conference.²⁵ The Bush Administration supported the

¹⁹ U.N. document, A/RES/52/111, December 12, 1997. The then-U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights was Mary Robinson of Ireland. The U.N. Human Rights Commission was replaced by the U.N. Human Rights Council in 2006 as the primary intergovernmental policymaking body for human rights issues. The Commission was widely criticized when perceived human rights abusers were elected as members. For more information, see CRS Report RL33608, *The United Nations Human Rights Council: Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted).

²⁰ The General Assembly decided in resolution 54/154, December 17, 1999, that WCAR would be held in Durban, South Africa, and that regional and organizational meetings would be held to prepare for the Conference.

²¹ U.N. document, A/RES/54/154, December 17, 1999. NGOs may participate in WCAR as provided for in U.N. Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31, July 25, 1996.

²² In 2000 and 2001, governments held three preparatory sessions in Geneva, Switzerland. Governments also held regional sessions in various countries. The European group met in France, the Americas group met in Chile, the African group met in Senegal, and the Asian group met in Iran. In 1999 and 2000, regional expert seminars were held in Ethiopia, Thailand, Switzerland, Chile, and Poland, where participants focused on issues such as protecting minorities, and economic and social measures for vulnerable groups.

²³ The Group of 21 comprised representatives from each of the five regions and a Chairman. It was chaired by South Africa, the host government. Members were Barbados, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico (Latin America and Caribbean); Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia (Africa); Canada, France, Sweden, and the United States (Western Europe and others); Czech Republic, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the Russian Federation (Eastern Europe); and India, Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq (Asia).

²⁴ U.N. document, A/RES/52/111, December 12, 1997, adopted without a vote.

²⁵ The WCAR Task Force was chaired by the Department of Justice and included the Department of State and the Small Business Administration. It solicited input from NGOs, coordinated government preparations for the Conference, and drew from the expertise of government agencies. It was represented on U.S. delegations to Preparatory Committee meetings and inter-sessional meetings. The Task Force office closed on September 30, 2001.

Conference and continued to support the Task Force. It also agreed to pay the U.S. share of the Conference costs and to provide an additional \$250,000 in voluntary contributions to the U.N. Secretariat.²⁶ In addition, the Administration participated in Preparatory Committee and Group of 21 discussions.²⁷ As preparations for WCAR progressed, however, the Bush Administration increasingly expressed concern with two issues: anti-Israel language in the draft outcome documents, and proposals for reparations and compensation for victims of slavery.

Anti-Israel Language

In February 2001, at the Asian regional preparatory meeting in Iran, members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) included language in the region's outcome documents that appeared to target Israel.²⁸ Some of the controversial text from the regional meeting was incorporated into the outcome documents negotiated at the Conference. Initial drafts of the WCAR Declaration, for example, included language that equated Zionism with racism.²⁹ Some countries, including the United States, Canada, and members of the European Union, strongly objected to these sentiments. They argued that WCAR was the wrong forum in which to raise the Israel-Palestine issue, and emphasized that individual countries and regional conflicts should not be singled out in Conference outcome documents. Countries in support of the text argued that the Israeli occupation of Palestine was racially motivated and therefore should be addressed at WCAR.

The Bush Administration emphasized that it would not participate in the Conference if language in the draft outcome documents continued to target Israel.³⁰ Consequently, there were some questions regarding the level and extent of U.S. participation, and, in late August 2001, the Administration announced that then-Secretary of State Colin Powell would not attend WCAR. The Administration stated that it would instead send a mid-level working delegation.³¹

Slavery and Reparations Language

The United States also expressed concern with language in the draft WCAR outcome documents that addressed reparations and compensation for slavery. At the African regional meeting in Senegal in 2001, participating governments agreed to language that requested an apology from

²⁶ Statement of William B. Wood, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Department of State, at a hearing before the House Subcommittee on International Operations, "A Discussion on the U.N. World Conference Against Racism," July 31, 2001, U.S. Government Printing Office, Serial No. 107-36.

²⁷ According to Administration officials, at the meetings the United States attempted to (1) acknowledge historic injustices against Africans, Native Americans, and others; (2) focus the work of the Conference on present day manifestations of racism and intolerance, and how to combat them; and (3) share U.S. experiences with the world and learn from other countries. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁸ U.N. document, A/CONF.189/PC.2/9, April 10, 2001.

²⁹ U.N. document, A/CONF.189/PC.3/7, July 12, 2001, p. 18. The draft stated, "The World Conference recognizes with deep concern the increase of racist practices of Zionism and anti-Semitism in various parts of the world, as well as the emergence of racial and violence movements based on discriminatory ideas, in particular, the Zionist movement which is based on racial superiority."

³⁰ President Bush stated, "We have made it very clear ... we will not participate in a conference that tries to isolate Israel and denigrates Israel." Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, August 24, 2001.

³¹ The Head of the U.S. delegation was Michael E. Southwick, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. Daily Press Briefing by Spokesperson Richard Boucher, U.S. Department of State, August 29, 2001.

states involved in the slave trade, as well as compensation and reparations for victims of racial discrimination and slavery.³² Some of this proposed language was included in the outcome documents considered at Durban. The draft Program of Action, for example, urged countries to protect against racism by ensuring that all persons have access to “adequate remedies ... and adequate reparations” for damage resulting from racial discrimination. The draft Declaration also expressed “explicit and unreserved apologies” to victims of slavery and their heirs.³³ The trans-Atlantic slave trade, in particular, was cited several times in the draft outcome documents.

In July 2001, the Administration called the specific mention of trans-Atlantic slavery in the proposed Durban drafts “extreme and unbalanced,” noting that its mention was “selective,” and “inconsistent with the goals of WCAR.”³⁴ The Administration further stated that there was no consensus in the United States on the reparations issue,³⁵ and noted that the United States had consistently opposed calls for reparations and would continue to do so. Assistant Secretary Wood further stated that the United States was ready to join WCAR participants in expressing regret for historic injustices such as slavery. He also emphasized that the purpose of WCAR was to focus on contemporary manifestations of racism and intolerance. The Administration advocated what it described as a “future-oriented approach” on the reparations issue, expressing support for programs that aimed to overcome Africa’s development challenges.³⁶

U.S. Walk-Out

At the Conference, the United States participated in initial negotiations. When it became clear that the anti-Israel language would not be removed, however, the U.S. delegation withdrew under instructions from then-Secretary of State Powell.³⁷ Israel joined the United States in withdrawing from the Conference. Because of its withdrawal, the United States did not pay \$250,000 in voluntary contributions to WCAR.³⁸

³² U.N. document, A/CONF.189/PC.2/8, March 27, 2001.

³³ Moreover, the draft Program of Action requested member states that “practiced and benefitted from the trans-Atlantic slave trade ... to initiate a constructive dialogue with people of African descent in order to identify and implement measures for ethical and moral satisfaction,” U.N. document, A/CONF.189/PC.3/8, July 12, 2001, p. 45.

³⁴ Statement of William B. Wood, U.S. Department of State, at a hearing before the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, “A Discussion on the U.N. World Conference Against Racism,” July 31, 2001, U.S. Government Printing Office, Serial No. 107-36, p. 31.

³⁵ Ibid. Assistant Secretary Wood also stated, “It is not clear what would be the legal or practical effect of a call for reparations for injustices more than a century old. Nor is it clear that such a call would contribute to eliminate racism in the contemporary world.” For further discussion of this issue, see CRS Report RS20740, *Proposals for Reparations for African Americans: A Brief Overview*, by (name redacted).

³⁶ Such programs included the New African Initiative—renamed the New Partnership for Africa’s Development. See CRS Report RS21353, *New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)*, by (name redacted).

³⁷ *U.S. Participation in the United Nations for 2003, Report by the President to the Congress*, Department of State, March 2003, p. 65. Secretary Powell stated, “I know that you do not combat racism by conferences that produce declarations containing hateful language ... or support the idea that we have made too much of the Holocaust; or suggests that apartheid exists in Israel; or that singles out only one country in the world—Israel—for censure and abuse,” Department of State Press Release, September 3, 2001.

³⁸ The State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provided \$25,000 to help develop a WCAR website. See <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/32959.htm>.

Congressional Response to WCAR

Some Members of Congress viewed WCAR as a crucial international mechanism for combating racism and supported full U.S. participation. Others, however, were concerned that language in the draft outcome documents appeared to target Israel, and urged the Administration not to participate if such language remained.³⁹ Some Members viewed WCAR as an opportunity to address historic and contemporary factors that may have contributed to present-day racism. They urged the Administration to participate regardless of controversial text in the draft outcome documents, arguing that the United States could bring balance to the issue.⁴⁰ Some Members also viewed the Conference as an opportunity for the United States to acknowledge its role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and disagreed with the Administration's position that slavery reparations should not be discussed at the Conference.⁴¹ Some Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) were particularly supportive of WCAR's objectives and full U.S. participation.⁴²

Members who attended the Conference as part of a congressional delegation held differing views on the U.S. withdrawal.⁴³ Some argued that singling out one country (Israel) in Conference outcome documents was unacceptable, and maintained that the Israel-Palestine dispute was not a racial issue.⁴⁴ Other Members disagreed with the U.S. decision to withdraw and emphasized that the United States should not allow one issue to overshadow the Conference's overall purpose of combating racism.⁴⁵

WCAR Outcomes: The Durban Declaration and Program of Action

After the United States and Israel withdrew from the Conference, the remaining member states engaged in a series of intense and difficult negotiations that resulted in WCAR's main outcome documents—the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.⁴⁶ These documents created international definitions and established new U.N. mechanisms to address racism and other

³⁹ On July 30, 2001, for instance, the House of Representatives passed a resolution stating that the Conference presented a "unique opportunity" to address global discrimination, but urged participants to address such prejudice without targeting specific regions or countries. See H.Res. 212 (107th Congress), "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the World Conference Against Racism ... presents a unique opportunity to address global discrimination," introduced by Rep. Tom Lantos on July 27, 2001, and passed by a vote of 408 to 3 on July 30, 2001.

⁴⁰ Statement by Rep. Julia Carson at a House Subcommittee on International Operations hearing, "A Discussion on the U.N. World Conference Against Racism," July 31, 2001, U.S. Government Printing Office, Serial No. 107-36, p. 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, statement of Rep. Barbara Lee, p. 16.

⁴² Then-chair of the CBC Eddie Bernice Johnson stated that it was "incumbent on the United States ... to ensure that this World Conference and any forum that seeks to address the issue of racism achieves its objectives to end this egregious violation here and abroad," "Bush's WCAR Representative has no Comment," by Hazel Trice Edney, *National Newspaper Publishers Association*, September 3, 2001.

⁴³ Members of the 2001 WCAR delegation included Reps. John Conyers, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Tom Lantos, Barbara Lee, Sheila Jackson Lee, and Diane Watson.

⁴⁴ "Transcript: Lantos Says Success of Racism Conference in Doubt," U.S. Department of State, August 9, 2001.

⁴⁵ See, for example, statements of Reps. Barbara Lee and Diane Watson, *Congressional Record*, September 6, 2001, pp. H5446-H5448.

⁴⁶ The Declaration and Program of Action were adopted on September 8, 2001. They are available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/pdf/Durban.pdf>.

related issues. In the Program of Action, for example, governments agreed to definitions of “victims of racism”⁴⁷ and “grounds for discrimination.”⁴⁸ Governments also decided to establish an anti-discrimination unit within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),⁴⁹ and requested that OHCHR work with five independent experts to follow up on the implementation of provisions in the Declaration and Program of Action.⁵⁰ The outcome documents also urged member states to establish and implement national policies and action plans to address racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance.⁵¹

Some observers expressed concern that WCAR’s focus on Israel and Palestine overshadowed other aspects of the Conference. Some, for example, spoke positively of the outcome documents’ focus on the vital role of human rights institutions in combating racism. Many supported the outcome documents’ focus on education and the role of good governance in addressing racial discrimination.⁵² Yet, some maintain that WCAR’s focus on Israel and Palestine diverted attention from subjects that they believe WCAR should have addressed more effectively—such as the rights of indigenous people⁵³ and specific instances of contemporary racism—such as caste discrimination in India.⁵⁴

Prior to the adoption of the Declaration and Program of Action, however, some governments disassociated themselves from or expressed reservations about specific provisions in the text—particularly those that addressed the situation in the Middle East, the impact of historic injustices such as slavery and colonialism, and the rights of indigenous peoples.⁵⁵ Some countries also disagreed with text that appeared to equate colonialism with slavery and genocide.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Paragraph one of the Durban Declaration states that “the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are individuals or groups of individuals who are or have been negatively affected by, subjected to, or targets of these scourges.”

⁴⁸ Paragraph two of the Declaration recognizes that “racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance occur on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin and that victims can suffer multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination based on other related grounds such as sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status.”

⁴⁹ The Discrimination Unit, now called the “Anti-Racial Discrimination Unit,” compiles data on racism, provides legal and administrative support to victims of racism, and collects background materials provided by states and NGOs under WCAR follow-up mechanisms.

⁵⁰ Five experts, representing different regions, are appointed by the U.N. Secretary-General from among candidates proposed by the Chairperson of the Human Rights Council, after consultation with the regional groups. For the list of experts and further information, see <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/groups/eminent-experts/index.htm>.

⁵¹ Durban Program of Action, paragraph 66.

⁵² U.N. Information Service Press Release, GA/SHC/3681, “Opposing Views Expressed as Third Committee Considers Final Document of Durban Conference on Racism,” February 1, 2002.

⁵³ See, for example, Darren Dick, “The United Nations World Conference Against Racism,” *The Indigenous Law Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 13, November/December 2001.

⁵⁴ See “Human Rights Watch, Caste at the World Conference Against Racism,” at <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/ caste/>. For more information on the caste system in India, see CRS Report RL33529, *India-U.S. Relations*, by (name redacted).

⁵⁵ Prior to the adoption of the outcome documents, statements and reservations were made by Australia, Belgium (on behalf of the EU), Canada, Chile, Ecuador (on behalf of Brazil, Canada, Chile, and Guatemala), Iran, Syria, and Switzerland. For a list of reservations by country, see the Report of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, U.N. document, A/CONF.189/12, pp. 117-144.

⁵⁶ Paragraph 99 of the Declaration acknowledges and profoundly regrets “the massive human suffering and the tragic plight of millions of men, women and children caused by slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade, apartheid, colonialism and genocide.”

Provisions on the Situation in the Middle East

In the final WCAR outcome documents, governments expressed concern about the “plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation” and recognized “the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State.”⁵⁷ They also called for the “the end of violence and the swift resumption of negotiations” in the Middle East. The outcome documents did not include text equating Zionism with racism. Members of the European Union viewed the final language as an improvement over previous drafts that appeared to repeatedly target Israel. Other countries, however, maintained that the situation in the Middle East should not be addressed at WCAR because it was a political situation rather than a racial one. Canada, in particular, disassociated itself from text that directly or indirectly mentioned the situation in the Middle East.⁵⁸ Conversely, some countries argued that the text did not go far enough to address the situation in the Palestinian territories.⁵⁹

Provisions on Slavery and Reparations

The Declaration acknowledged slavery and the slave trade, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as a “crime against humanity,” and invited the international community to express regret or remorse for slavery.⁶⁰ The Program of Action also recognized that slavery has “undeniably contributed” to poverty and underdevelopment.⁶¹ It urged countries to reinforce protection against racism by ensuring that all persons enjoy the right to seek just and adequate reparations from damage resulting from discrimination.⁶² Further, it recognized the need to develop programs for the social and economic development of societies impacted by historic injustices such as slavery.⁶³ It called on developed countries and the U.N. system to support development mechanisms, particularly in Africa.⁶⁴ The outcome documents did not call for reparations or an explicit apology for historical injustices such as slavery. Consequently, some African and Caribbean states maintained that the Conference did not sufficiently address the issue.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Paragraph 161 of the Program of Action calls for respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as for the principle of self-determination and the end of all suffering, “thus allowing Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom.”

⁵⁸ Representatives from Canada stated, “We are not satisfied with this Conference. Not enough time has been dedicated to advancing its objectives.... We believe, we have said in the clearest possible terms, that it was inappropriate—wrong—to address the Palestinian-Israel conflict in this forum,” U.N. document, A/CONF.189/12, p. 119.

⁵⁹ For this reason, Iran dissociated itself with text addressing the Middle East. U.N. document, A/CONF.189/12, pp. 125-126.

⁶⁰ Durban Declaration, paragraph 13. Additionally, paragraph 100 notes that some have “taken the initiative of regretting or expressing remorse or presenting apologies.” It strongly condemns the fact that slavery and slavery-like practices still exist. Paragraph 29 further urges states to “take immediate measures as a matter of priority to end such practices.”

⁶¹ Durban Program of Action, paragraph 158.

⁶² *Ibid.*, paragraph 166.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 158.

⁶⁴ Specifically, it encouraged support for mechanisms such as the New African Initiative and the World Solidarity Fund for the Eradication of Poverty.

⁶⁵ See statements by the representatives of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, U.N. document, A/CONF.189/12, pp. 128 and 130, respectively. Also see the Declaration and Program of Action from the African Regional Meeting in Senegal, U.N. document, A/CONF.189/PC.2/8, March 27, 2001.

General Assembly Adoption of Outcome Documents

In March 2002, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution on the Durban Declaration and Program of Action that endorsed the implementation of the outcome documents, urged U.N. member states to create national action plans and policies to combat slavery, and called for the creation of the Anti-Discrimination Unit and a Group of Experts to follow up on implementation of Durban outcomes.⁶⁶ One hundred and thirty-four countries voted for the resolution, two opposed it (United States and Israel), and two abstained (Australia and Canada). When explaining its vote, the United States stated that because it withdrew from the WCAR, it did not agree to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. It opposed the creation of the Discrimination Unit and the group of experts, arguing that the cost of the new mechanisms would place additional pressure on the U.N. regular budget.⁶⁷

Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Forum

Representatives from local, national, and international NGOs held an NGO Forum parallel to the Conference in Durban.⁶⁸ At its conclusion, Forum participants agreed to the NGO WCAR Declaration, which a number of observers viewed as an unbalanced document that disproportionately focused on Israel. Specifically, the Declaration called for the end of “Israeli systematic perpetration of racist crimes, including war crimes, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing,” and declared Israel a “racist, apartheid state.”⁶⁹ Because of the highly politicized wording of the Declaration, some NGOs disassociated themselves from the final text.⁷⁰ Then-U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson described the NGO Forum as “hateful, even racist,” and refused to receive or endorse the NGO Declaration.⁷¹ The Forum attracted significant attention from the international media, and some argued that it overshadowed the Conference itself.⁷²

The 2009 Durban Review Conference

Since WCAR, U.N. member states increasingly explored the possibility of holding a follow-up conference to review progress made on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. On December 19, 2006, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution

⁶⁶ U.N. document, A/RES/56/266, March 27, 2002.

⁶⁷ The U.S. statement is available in U.N. document, A/56/PV.97, March 27, 2002, p. 3.

⁶⁸ The Forum, which was held from August 21 to September 1, 2001, was organized and managed by NGOs; however, the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received voluntary contributions from donors to fund the event. OHCHR also funded the participation of some NGOs.

⁶⁹ “WCAR NGO Forum Declaration,” September 3, 2001, paragraphs 160 and 162. Paragraph 425 calls for the “condemnation of those states who are supporting, aiding and abetting the Israeli Apartheid state.”

⁷⁰ “ERRC Dissociates Itself from WCAR NGO Forum,” *European Roma Rights Center*, September 5, 2001. Since WCAR, other NGOs have expressed regret over the outcome of the Forum and pledged to learn from the shortcomings of WCAR. See “Statement of Core Principles For WCAR Follow-Up,” signed by over 90 NGOs, available at <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/media/disc/2008/alert/207/index.htm>.

⁷¹ See joint NGO document, “Statement of Core Principles For WCAR Follow-Up.”

⁷² “NGO Forum at Durban Conference 2001,” *NGO Monitor*, available at http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/ngo_forum_at_durban_conference_.

deciding to convene the Durban Review Conference.⁷³ The Conference will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from April 20 to 24, 2009.⁷⁴

Objectives, Funding, and Participation

At the Conference, governments aim to

- review the progress and assess implementation of the Durban outcome documents by all stakeholders, including assessing contemporary manifestations of racism;
- assess the effectiveness of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms and other related U.N. programs; and
- identify and share good practices achieved in combating racism.⁷⁵

The preparatory process for the Review Conference is similar to the process for WCAR. The U.N. Human Rights Council, for instance, is the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference.⁷⁶ All U.N. member states were invited to join the Review Conference Preparatory Committee to determine the objectives of the Conference. The Committee elected a Bureau composed of one chairperson and 20 vice-chairpersons (Group of 21) to decide on the objectives of the Review Conference.⁷⁷ As with WCAR, governments are engaging in organizational, substantive, and regional meetings to determine the scope of the Conference and agree to regional outcome documents. (For more information on these meetings, see the “Issues for Congress” section.)

The Review Conference is funded through assessed contributions to the U.N. regular budget and through voluntary contributions from member states and organizations. On November 17, 2008, a report from the Secretary-General estimated that the overall additional financial requirements for the Durban Review Conference and its preparatory process was \$3,754,800.⁷⁸ The Secretary-General will ask for only \$570,400 because he anticipates that the remaining balance of \$3,184,400 will be absorbed by other human rights-related parts of the U.N. regular budget.⁷⁹ Funding for the Conference and the Human Rights Council does not overlap. Both the Council and the Review Conference are funded under separate parts of the OHCHR budget.⁸⁰

⁷³ U.N. document, A/RES/61/149, December 19, 2006, adopted 179 votes to two, with four abstentions. The United States and Israel voted against the resolution, with Australia, Canada, the Marshall Islands, and Palau, abstaining.

⁷⁴ U.N. Office at Geneva press release, “Review Conference on Racism, Discrimination, and Intolerance to be Held in Geneva in April 2009,” May 27, 2008.

⁷⁵ U.N. document, A/62/375, October 2, 2007, p. 36.

⁷⁶ The Human Rights Council replaced the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 2006.

⁷⁷ More information on the Group of 21 is available in the “Balance in the Durban Review Preparatory Process?” section, and <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/racism/DurbanReview/bureau.htm>.

⁷⁸ This is lower than a preliminary Secretariat estimate of \$6,794,700 due to a number of developments, including the decision of some regional groups to cancel regional sessions. Moreover, OHCHR was able to absorb some additional costs within existing resources. (CRS discussions with OHCHR, October 2008.) The preliminary estimate is available in U.N. document, A/C.5/62/21, December 14, 2007.

⁷⁹ See “Programme Budget Implications of Draft Resolution A/C.3/63/L.51/Rev.1, Statement Submitted by the Secretary-General in Accordance with Rule 153 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly,” U.N. document A/C.3/63/L.70 [draft], November 17, 2008.

⁸⁰ CRS discussions with OHCHR, October 2008. OHCHR is funded by the U.N. regular budget, for which the United (continued...)

Participation in the Review Conference is open to U.N. member states, U.N. bodies and programs, regional organizations and commissions, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs.⁸¹ It is unclear whether an NGO Forum will be held parallel to the Conference.⁸²

U.S. Response

Barack Obama Administration

On February 14, 2009, the Barack Obama Administration announced that it would send a delegation to Review Conference consultations held from February 16 to 18, 2009. Administration officials stated that U.S. participation in the consultations “does not indicate—and should not be misconstrued to indicate—that the United States will participate in April in the World Conference Against Racism itself.”⁸³ On February 20, 2009, the Administration announced that during the February 16-18 consultations, “the [U.S.] delegation consulted with 30 national delegations from every region to outline our concerns with the current outcome document and to explore whether there exists the possibility for progress in re-shaping the document and tenor of the discussions.” On February 27, 2009, the Administration further announced that the draft Review Conference outcome document being negotiated by member states “has gone from bad to worse, and....is not salvageable.” Consequently, according to Administration officials, the United States “will not engage in further negotiations on this draft text nor will we [the United States] participate in a conference based on this text.”⁸⁴

The Administration stated that it remained open to re-engaging in negotiations if a draft document appeared to take a “constructive approach” to addressing racism and discrimination. Specifically, it emphasized that the Review Conference outcome document text should: not reaffirm the “flawed” 2001 Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA); single out a specific country (such as Israel); embrace the “troubling concept” of defamation of religion; or go further than the DDPA in addressing the issue of slavery reparations.⁸⁵

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States is assessed at 22%. For more information on U.N. funding, see CRS Report RL33611, *United Nations System Funding: Congressional Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

⁸¹ NGOs are encouraged to participate as observers in the Review Conference, including preparatory meetings. They may participate in the Review Conference, as provided for in U.N. Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31, July 25, 1996.

⁸² NGOs would decide whether to hold a Forum, however the U.N. General Assembly would determine whether its venue will be on U.N. premises. Marc Perelman, “U.N. and the West Trying to Prevent Another Anti-Israel ‘Durban’ Meeting,” *The Forward*, October 8, 2008.

⁸³ Department of State press release, “U.S. Participation in Consultations for the World Conference Against Racism,” February 14, 2009.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

George W. Bush Administration

The Bush Administration consistently opposed a Durban Review Conference. It stopped short, however, of announcing it will boycott the Conference, likely recognizing that a new Administration would make the final decision regarding participation. The United States, along with Israel, voted against the General Assembly resolution calling for the Review Conference in December 2006.⁸⁶ Similarly, in December 2007, the United States voted against a resolution related to the biennium budget for 2008-2009, primarily because it included funding for the Conference.⁸⁷ The Administration also declined to participate in the preparatory events for the Review Conference, and has consistently voted against U.N. General Assembly resolutions that support or fund the Review Conference.⁸⁸

On April 8, 2008, then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad announced, “the United States is not participating in the process and we have no plans to do so. We will not participate unless it is proven that the conference will not be used as a platform for anti-Semitic behavior.”⁸⁹ The Ambassador also announced that the United States would withhold a portion of its 2008 contribution to the U.N. regular budget that would fund the U.N. Human Rights Council, including money for the preparatory process for the Review Conference.⁹⁰

111th and 110th Congresses

Members of the 110th and 111th Congresses have demonstrated an interest in the Review Conference. Some Members, for example, have introduced legislation stating the United States should not participate in the Conference because of WCAR’s focus on Israel.⁹¹ On March 13, 2008, the Senate unanimously passed an amendment to the FY2009 Budget Resolution to deny funding to the Durban Review Conference.⁹² Some Members have also expressed opposition to

⁸⁶ See U.N. General Assembly Resolution 61/149, December 19, 2006, which decided to convene the Review Conference.

⁸⁷ The United States joined consensus for the resolution, Programme Budget for the Biennium 2008-2009 (resolution 62/237, December 22, 2007), but only after calling for a vote on a related resolution, Questions Relating to the Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2008-2009 (resolution 62/236, December 22, 2007). The United States was concerned that the ad hoc nature of the Secretary-General’s approach to the budget could allow the Durban Review Conference to be funded through the U.N. regular budget. See “Voting Practices in the United Nations—2007,” Department of State, pp. 136-137.

⁸⁸ According to Bush Administration officials, the United States has sent a note-taker to the Review Conference preparatory meetings to ensure an accurate report of the proceedings. U.S. Mission to the United Nations Press Release #075(08), “Statement by Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on the Durban II Conference and the Human Rights Council,” April 8, 2008.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Ambassador Khalilzad did not define or describe what actions constitute “anti-Semitic behavior.”

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* At a House Subcommittee on International Organizations hearing, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Kristin Silverberg stated, “We will be withholding our funding this year for the Human Rights Council ... and also for Durban ... so we will be withholding the U.S. share of funding for both...” United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: An Underfunded International Mandate—The Role of the United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, Serial No. 110-161, April 2, 2008, p. 19.

⁹¹ H.R. 5847 [110th] the “United Nations Durban Review Conference (Durban II) Funding Prohibition Act of 2008,” introduced by Rep. Scott Garrett on April 17, 2008, and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the same day; and H.Res. 879 [110th] “Objecting to United Nations funding of the Durban Review Conference using the United Nations regular budget,” introduced by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, on December 17, 2007.

⁹² S.Amdt. 4264 [110th] To deny funding for the United Nations Durban II Anti-Racism Conference,” to S.Con.Res. 70, “An original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2009....” Sen. Norm Coleman introduced the amendment March 12, 2008, and it was agreed to by (continued...)

U.S. funding of or participation in the Review Conference in correspondence with Administration officials.⁹³ Nevertheless, some Members viewed the Conference as a key opportunity to address international racism. On September 23, 2008, for example, the House adopted a resolution expressing the sense of the House that the United States should lead a high-level diplomatic effort to ensure that the Durban Review Conference serves as a forum to review implementation of commitments made at the 2001 Durban Conference, rather than as a vehicle for anti-Semitism.⁹⁴

Participation of Other Governments

A number of governments have concerns about the Review Conference. In January 2008, Canada announced that it would boycott the Conference because of indications that it would repeat the mistakes of WCAR.⁹⁵ Other countries announced that they will not participate if it becomes evident that the Review Conference will target Israel.⁹⁶ French President Nicolas Sarkozy stated that France will “not allow a repeat of the digressions and extremes of 2001.”⁹⁷ Representatives of the United Kingdom announced that the government would not participate in an international conference with the “degree of anti-Semitism that was disgracefully on view” at WCAR.⁹⁸ Initially, Israel stated that it would boycott the Review Conference unless it was proven that the Conference would not be used as a platform for further anti-Israeli sentiments and activities.⁹⁹ In November 2008, however, Israel formally announced it would not participate in the Conference, stating that the Conference “appears to be heading once again towards becoming an anti-Israel tribunal, which has nothing to do with fighting racism.”¹⁰⁰ In March 2009, Italy also announced that it would not participate in the Conference.¹⁰¹ U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay urged countries that announced they may not participate in the Conference to

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unanimous consent on March 13, 2008. The Senate agreed to S.Con.Res. 70 by a vote of 48 to 45 on June 4, 2008, and House agreed to it by a vote of 214 to 210 on June 5, 2008.

⁹³ H.Res. 42 [111th], “Calling on the President and the Secretary of State to withhold United States Funding For and Participation in the Durban Review Conference and its Preparatory Activities,” introduced by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen on January 9, 2009, and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

⁹⁴ H.Res. 1361 [110th] also aims to defeat “the campaign by some members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to divert the United Nations Durban Review Conference from a review of problems in their own and other countries by attacking Israel, promoting anti-Semitism, and undermining the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” It was introduced by Rep. Howard Berman on July 22, 2008, and passed by a voice vote on September 23, 2008.

⁹⁵ Canadian representatives stated that they hoped the Review Conference would “remedy mistakes of the past,” but based on preparations for the Conference, the government concluded that it would not. Press Release No. 16, “Canada Takes a Firm Stance on United Nations World Conference Against Racism,” Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, January 23, 2008.

⁹⁶ The government of the Netherlands stated it will not accept any attempts to call Israel a racist state, and would not hesitate to withdraw if similar events occur, “Netherlands Will not Accept Anti-Semitic Slurs,” Radio Netherlands Worldwide, May 18, 2008.

⁹⁷ “Speech by the President of the French Republic” at the Annual Dinner for the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France, February 13, 2008.

⁹⁸ “Oral Answers to Questions, Durban II.” U.K. House of Commons Debates—Foreign and Commonwealth Office,” May 13, 2008.

⁹⁹ Address by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 24, 2008.

¹⁰⁰ “Israel Will Not Participate in the Durban 2 Conference,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release, November 19, 2008.

¹⁰¹ “Italy Pulls Out of U.N. Racism Conference,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 5, 2009.

reconsider. She argued that the anti-racism debate and agenda will be significantly compromised without the participation of all countries.¹⁰²

Issues for Congress

Members of the 111th Congress may wish to consider a number of issues when conducting oversight and considering U.S. funding for the Durban Review Conference and possible follow-up activities.

Balance in the Durban Review Preparatory Process?

The Obama Administration and some Members of Congress have suggested that the United States should participate in the Durban Review Conference only if it is proven that the Conference will not: (1) become a vehicle for anti-Semitism, (2) reaffirm the 2001 Durban Declaration and Program of Action, or (3) focus on defamation of religion. Consequently, Members of the 111th Congress may wish to consider U.N. member state actions during the Review Conference preparatory process.

Scope of the Review Conference

During the preparatory process, participating governments aimed to determine the scope and agenda of the Conference. Countries such as Australia, Canada, and Israel, and members of the European Union, maintain that the Conference should focus primarily on member state and U.N. system implementation of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action instead of reopening controversial issues agreed to at WCAR.¹⁰³ Some hope that by concentrating on the implementation of WCAR outcomes, participants can achieve a broad consensus and avoid repeating the perceived mistakes of the previous Conference.¹⁰⁴ Other countries, particularly members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC),¹⁰⁵ contend that the Review Conference should focus not only on implementation of WCAR outcomes but also on “the contemporary scourge of racism,” including the plight and suffering of the Palestinian people and the defamation of religions, particularly Islam.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Address by Ms. Navanethem Pillay, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights on the occasion of the opening of the 9th Session of the Human Rights Council, September 8, 2008.

¹⁰³ Statement by H.E. Ambassador Francisco Xavier Esteves of Portugal on Behalf of the European Union, Opening Statement, Organizational Session of the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference, August 27, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Disagreements over Review Conference objectives are reflected in member state votes for and against U.N. General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions that address Conference objectives and funding. Australia, Canada, and the United States, for example, voted against resolution A/C.3/62/L.65/Rev.1 (November 27, 2007) in the U.N. General Assembly’s Third Committee because it seemed to contradict a previous consensus that the Review Conference will focus on implementation of WCAR outcomes rather than issues negotiated at WCAR, including contemporary forms of racism and intolerance.

¹⁰⁵ On February 27, 2008, President Bush appointed a Special Envoy to the OIC, Sada Cumber. The envoy’s mission is to explain U.S. foreign policy to the OIC and Muslim communities worldwide, and to establish broader engagement with the organization—particularly related to education, women’s rights, health, and science and technology. For more information, see <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/101432.htm> and <http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/102742.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Organizational Session of the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference, August 27, 2007.

Composition of the Conference Bureau (Group of 21)

On August 27, 2007, the Review Conference Preparatory Committee elected a Bureau of 21 members (Group of 21) to determine Conference modalities and objectives.¹⁰⁷ A number of Conference observers and participants have expressed concern about the composition of the Group, which includes countries that expressed anti-Israel sentiments at WCAR, including Iran, Indonesia, and Senegal.¹⁰⁸ Some are particularly concerned that Libya and Cuba—states that many view as anti-Israeli and anti-democratic—are Bureau Chair and Vice-Chairperson Rapporteur.

Organizational Meetings and Intergovernmental Working Group Drafts¹⁰⁹

To prepare for the Review Conference, participating governments have attended several organizational meetings to consider the scope and agenda of the Review Conference.¹¹⁰ Some governments also have participated in meetings of the Intersessional Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group of the Preparatory Committee, which is tasked with reviewing recommendations submitted by countries and other stakeholders for possible inclusion in the Review Conference outcome document.¹¹¹ Some expressed concern with drafts proposed by the Working Group. In May 2008, for example, the Working Group circulated a list of issues that might be included in the Conference outcome document. The list specifically referred to the “plight of the Palestinian people” and stated that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories violates a range of civil and political rights.¹¹²

Draft Review Conference Outcome Document (as of March 17, 2009)

During the past year, U.N. Member States have been formally and informally negotiating the draft outcome document that will be considered at the Review Conference. On March 17, 2009, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published a draft outcome document “rolling text” based on ongoing Member State negotiations.¹¹³ The 17-page document eliminates

¹⁰⁷ Members of the Bureau were elected at the first organizational meeting of the Preparatory Committee. A representative from Libya was elected as Chairperson. Vice-Chairpersons were elected from Argentina, Armenia, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, Cuba (as Vice-Chairperson-Rapporteur), Estonia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran, Norway, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, and Turkey.

¹⁰⁸ Seven Bureau members belong to the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

¹⁰⁹ In addition, many governments met at regional sessions where they shared best practices for combating racism and negotiated text to be incorporated into the Review Conference outcome documents. The meetings generated controversy among some Conference participants and observers due to their apparent focus on the Israel-Palestine conflict and, to a lesser extent, on reparations and compensation for slavery. For more information on the outcomes of the regional meetings, contact the author of this report.

¹¹⁰ The first organizational session was held from August 27 to 31, 2007; the first substantive session from April 21 to May 2, 2008; and the second substantive session was held from October 6 to 17, 2008. A third substantive session will be held from April 15 to 17, 2009. All sessions are held in Geneva, Switzerland.

¹¹¹ The Intersessional Open-ended Working Group was proposed by the Group of 21 and created at the first substantive session in May 2008. Zohrab Mnatsakanian, Ambassador of Armenia, was designated Chairperson of the working group by the Preparatory Committee. See U.N. document, A/CONF.211/PC.2/4, April 16, 2008.

¹¹² “Outcome Document—Inventory of Issues,” May 27, 2008, available at <http://www.eyeontheun.org/durban.asp?p=577>.

¹¹³ U.N. document, “Rolling text based on the revised version of the technically review text (A/CONF.211/PC/WG.2/CRP) submitted by the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the intersessional open-ended working (continued...)”

many controversial aspects of previous drafts, including specific mentions of Israel, Palestine, and “defamation of religion.”¹¹⁴ Critics, however, contend that while the March 8 text might be seen as an improvement over previous drafts it does not meet the conditions for U.S. participation. Specifically, opponents point to paragraph 1 which reaffirms the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA).¹¹⁵ The DDPA had expressed concern about the “plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation” and recognized “the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State.”¹¹⁶ Critics hold that by reaffirming the DDPA, the Review Conference draft outcome is singling out Israel as a perpetrator of racism.

Supporters of U.S. participation argue that the shortened March 8 text is an encouraging development and that the United States should participate in the Review Conference to influence its outcome.¹¹⁷ A representative from the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reportedly stated, “we believe this shortened text represents a solid and meaningful basis for negotiations by member states toward a positive outcome for the Conference.”¹¹⁸ When advocating U.S. participation, a number of supporters emphasize the difference between early WCAR drafts in 2001 that equated Zionism with racism and the final DDPA that contained, in the view of many, relatively moderate language by comparison.

U.S. Funding of the Review Conference

Bush Administration officials indicated that the United States would not fund the Review Conference or its preparatory process unless it was proven that the Conference would not become a platform for anti-Semitic behavior.¹¹⁹ The final decision regarding U.S. funding of the Conference, however, will be made by the Obama Administration or Members of the 111th Congress. If Congress does not enact legislation prohibiting U.S. funding for the Review Conference, the Obama Administration may decide on its own to withhold the U.S. proportionate share of U.S. contributions prior to the Conference. If such a scenario occurred, it would raise the question as to whether the Administration would release funding after the Conference if the outcome was acceptable to the United States.

Specifically, some Members of the 110th and 111th Congresses proposed that the United States withhold a proportionate share of its U.N. assessed contributions, approximately 22%, from the

(...continued)

group mandated to continue and finalize the process of negotiations on and drafting of the outcome document,” March 17, 2009, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/SPdocs/Durban/RollingtextDurban.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ Examples of previous drafts include: (1) U.N. document, A/CONF.211/PC/WG.2/CRP.1, October 27, 2008, and (2) U.N. document, A/CONF.211/PC/WG.2/CRP.2, December 26, 2008. For an analysis of these drafts, contact the author of this report.

¹¹⁵ Patrick Goodenough, “Revised Durban II Text Does not Meet Conditions for U.S. Participation, Critics Say,” *CSNNews.com*, March 18, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Paragraph 161 of the Program of Action calls for respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as for the principle of self-determination and the end of all suffering, “thus allowing Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom.”

¹¹⁷ Haider Rizvi, “Durban II: U.S. Condemned for Boycott of Global Racism Conference,” *Inter Press News Service*, March 26, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Frank Jordans, “Draft for Racism Meeting Drops Israel Criticism,” *Associated Press*, March 18, 2009.

¹¹⁹ See “U.S. Response” section for more information.

U.N. regular budget, which is used to fund the Conference. Withholding funds in this manner would not affect the Conference because assessed contributions finance the U.N. regular budget in its entirety and not specific parts of it. The U.S. decision to withhold a proportionate share of funding from the U.N. Human Rights Council for FY2008¹²⁰ would not affect funding for the Durban Review Conference or its preparatory process because funding for both mechanisms falls under separate parts of the budget of the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹²¹

As of November 17, 2008, the Secretary-General estimates that the cost of the Review Conference and its preparatory process will be \$3,754,800.¹²² However, the Secretary-General will seek only \$570,400 in additional funding because he anticipates that the balance of \$3,184,400 will be absorbed by other related parts of the U.N. regular budget.¹²³

WCAR Outcome Documents and U.S. Participation

Some suggest that the United States should participate in and provide funding for the Durban Review Conference in part because the final text that addresses the situation in Israel and Palestine in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action was significantly toned down from drafts that led to the U.S. withdrawal.¹²⁴ Some argue that the U.S. and Israeli withdrawals from WCAR were a turning point in negotiations and sent a powerful diplomatic message to Conference participants. They contend that the withdrawals pressured other governments to adopt more moderate language on the Middle East in the final outcome documents.¹²⁵ Conversely, some contend that the language in the Declaration and Program of Action remains unacceptable to the United States. To support this view, opponents point to the Bush Administration's policy of consistently voting against resolutions supporting the Review Conference in U.N. fora. They maintain that the Declaration and Program of Action unfairly single out one regional conflict and refer to the plight of only one party—the Palestinians—with no mention of Israel.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ The Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriation Act, 2008 (Division J of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 P.L. 110-161). Congress prohibits U.S. contributions to support the Council unless (1) the Secretary of State certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that Council funding is "in the national interest of the United States" or (2) the United States is a member of the Council. On April 8, 2008, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad stated that the United States would withhold funding for the Council due to its focus on Israel. U.S. Mission to the United Nations Press Release #075(08).

¹²¹ CRS discussions with OHCHR, October 2008.

¹²² U.N. document A/C.3/63/L.70 [draft], November 17, 2008.

¹²³ For more information on Review Conference funding, see the "Objectives, Funding, and Participation" section.

¹²⁴ Serge Schmemmann, "The Accord on Racism: U.S. Walkout; Was it Repudiated or Justified by the Conference's Accord?" *New York Times*, September 9, 2001. Also see the "WCAR Outcomes: Durban Declaration and Program of Action" section.

¹²⁵ Some supporters, for example, note that Israel stated that it was "satisfied that the clauses full of hate and incitement against it and the Jewish nation were removed from the conference's final outcome document." Serge Schmemmann, *New York Times*, September 9, 2001. Also see "Israel's reaction to the conclusion of the U.N. Conference Against Racism in Durban," and "The Conclusion of the Durban Conference: Comments by Israeli Leaders and Officials," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Releases, September 9, 2001.

¹²⁶ Rep. Tom Lantos, "The Durban Debacle: An Insider's View of the U.N. World Conference Against Racism," *The Fletcher Forum on World Affairs*, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, vol. 26:I, Winter/Spring 2002.

Political and Diplomatic Impact of U.S. Engagement

For some, the question of U.S. participation or non-participation in the Durban Review Conference touches on the broader issue of U.S. engagement in the U.N. system. Supporters contend that U.S. participation in U.N. efforts such as the Review Conference is important to the success and credibility of the United Nations as a whole. They argue that instead of withdrawing from U.N. conferences that have processes or outcomes it opposes, the United States should fully participate and work from within to build member state coalitions in support of U.S. policies. If the United States does not fully participate in U.N. fora, some argue, U.N. member state actions might be determined by groups of member states advocating agendas that are contrary to U.S. interests. They maintain that U.S. absence from such U.N. efforts could create a vacuum in which views opposed by the United States hold supreme.¹²⁷ Supporters contend that a piecemeal and selective approach to participation in the United Nations damages the U.S. negotiating position and its influence both within and outside of the U.N. system.¹²⁸ Moreover, some argue that U.S. engagement in U.N. human rights efforts such as the Review Conference provides a valuable international tool for groups and individuals battling racism in countries where human rights is not a priority.

Opponents of U.S. participation in the Review Conference maintain that U.S. engagement would give undeserved legitimacy to U.N. mechanisms that provide a platform for member states to target Israel. They also argue that it would imply that the United States supports the anti-Semitism demonstrated at WCAR as well as what many perceive as unbalanced language in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. According to some, U.S. non-participation in the Review Conference sends a clear message to U.N. member states that repeatedly targeting one country and regional conflict in U.N. fora is unacceptable to the United States. They contend that the long-term political impact of such a message outweighs the short-term diplomatic impact of U.S. non-participation or withdrawal. These opponents therefore agree with the Bush Administration's decision not to participate in the preparatory process until, as U.S. officials say, it is proven that the Review Conference will not become a platform for anti-Semitism. They argue that holding out the possibility of U.S. participation—as well as the participation of other like-minded governments who have made similar statements—may persuade U.N. member states to take a more balanced approach when drafting and negotiating Review Conference outcome documents in preparation for the April 2009 Conference.

¹²⁷ Such perspectives apply to United States-United Nations relations beyond WCAR and the Durban Review Conference. In 1974, for example, during the 29th session of the U.N. General Assembly, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John A. Scali stated, “Each time that this Assembly makes a decision which a significantly minority of members regard as unfair or one-sided, it further erodes vital support for the United Nations among the minority...” He stated that at the time, the General Assembly demonstrated a “sharply increased tendency ... to disregard its normal procedures to benefit the side which enjoys the favor of the majority, and to silence, and even exclude, the representatives of Member States whose policies the majority condemns.” See “U.S. Position at the 29th U.N. General Assembly,” U.S. Department of State Publication 8800, No. 13, International Organization and Conference Series 119, February 1975.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the possible implications of the United States withholding funding from the United Nations, see CRS Report RL33848, *United Nations Reform: U.S. Policy and International Perspectives*, by (name redacted).

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