

UN Human Rights Council 51: UK explanation of vote on racism resolution

Mr. President, we remain resolute in our commitment to combating all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and related intolerance whether that be at home or abroad. Discrimination of any kind has no place in society, and we will continue to treat all forms of discrimination with equal seriousness.

Nonetheless, we have a number of concerns with this text. We do not agree with the multiple references to the Durban Conference, given the historic concerns over antisemitism. And we cannot accept the references to the Durban Review Conference or the positive language regarding last year's commemorative event in New York and its political declaration.

We do not agree with claims made in this resolution that states are required to make reparations for the slave trade and colonialism, which caused great suffering to many but were not, at that time, violations of international law. Moreover, these claims divert focus from the pressing challenges of tackling contemporary racism and global inequality – which are global challenges affecting all regions. We believe that the most effective way for us all today to respond to the cruelty of the past is to ensure that current and future generations do not forget what happened.

Mr. President, we stressed last year that the importance of the fight against racism requires that we move forward together on a common path. For that to happen, we must come together to find a new approach, one that focuses on what we are all individually and collectively going to do to combat the scourge that is modern-day racism. This draft resolution, however, does not offer the sort of new approach around which we can achieve consensus and for that reason we will vote against it.

We are committed to continuing a dialogue with the sponsors of this resolution and hope that we might be able to reach a different outcome in the future.

Thank you Mr. President.