

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Livni: "Israel will not participate in the Durban 2 Conference"
(Communicated by the Foreign Ministry Spokesman)

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tzipi Livni, announced today, in front of the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities of North America, that Israel will not participate and will not legitimize the Durban 2 Conference.

Two years ago, the UN General Assembly decided to convene in Geneva in 2009 the Durban Review Conference, as a follow-up to "the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance" held in Durban in September 2001. The Durban Conference of 2001 became a forum for pernicious accusations and incitement against Israel, attacks against Zionism libeling it as a form of racism, denial of the unique and special nature of the Holocaust, and a distortion of the meaning of the term *anti-Semitism*.

Although we had many reasons to believe that the Review Conference will be a repetition of Durban 1, Israel announced in February 2008 that it would wait for an assurance that the incitement and gross excesses of 2001 will not be repeated in the upcoming Review Conference. Since then, unfortunately, we have not seen any proof that anything would be better. On the contrary - the Asian Group paper which was submitted to the Preparatory Committee contains the same language of hate which undermined the first Durban Conference. The document reproduces, almost word-by-word, the rhetoric of the Tehran Planning Meeting in 2001, a meeting which led to the Durban 1 farce. Once again extremist Arab and Muslim states wish to control the content of the conference and derail it from its original mission.

Regrettably the Asian document was compiled into the "Draft Outcome Document", which appears now on an official UN website. In this "Draft Outcome Document" no particular country is named or singled out, except for Israel.

During recent months, we expressed the hope that the language of hatred will not repeat itself; we declared that we will not agree to the singling out of Israel, and we will object to incitement and condemnation of Israel. Despite our efforts and those of friendly countries, for whose position we are grateful, the conference appears to be heading once again towards becoming an anti-Israeli tribunal, which has nothing to do with fighting racism.

Israel is fully aware of the importance of the international fight against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, and, therefore, looked forward to the success of the review conference.

The vitriolic tone and context of the "Draft Outcome Document" continue to undermine the genuine aims and objectives of the Durban Conference, which leaves us no choice, but to withdraw from what, once again, will apparently become a platform for denigrating Israel.

In view of this situation, Israel will not participate and will not legitimize the Review Conference, which will be used as a platform for further anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic activity. We call upon the international community not to participate in a conference which seeks to legitimize hatred and extremism under the banner of the "fight against racism".