

STATEMENT BY ECAJ ON DURBAN 11

SYDNEY: 3 March 2009

The President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Mr Robert Goot AM SC, today welcomed the decision of the United States government, announced over the weekend, to withdraw from the process relating to the World Conference Against Racism, known as Durban 11 and to not attend the Durban 11 Conference, scheduled to begin in Geneva on April 20.

“The 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance” in Durban (Durban 1) was meant to lay down a blueprint for nations to combat racism. Instead it became a platform for promoting anti-Israel and antisemitic propaganda within the framework of the United Nations”, Mr Goot said.

"Every day it has become clearer that Durban 11 would become a repeat of the failed event held in Durban in September 2001”, Goot said.

Goot also pointed out that countries with abysmal human rights records were in the forefront of activities leading up to the Durban Review Conference.

"Surely no good can result from a conference where countries such as Libya, Iran, Pakistan and Syria are dictating the agenda. The plights of the victims of true racism and discrimination are being ignored. Sudan is not condemned for the mass killings in Darfur, Iran has been given a pass for its cruel treatment of Bahais and other minorities, as well as its mass executions of students and dissidents. Pakistan is not being held accountable for introducing Sharia law in order to appease the Taliban. These and other countries are attempting to protect their extremist ideologies under the guise of banning the 'defamation of religion' while at the same time refusing to condemn Holocaust denial but identifying only one country - Israel for trenchant and unfounded criticism," Goot added.

The Obama administration and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton deserve praise for sending a strong warning signal to the UN. Unfortunately, the efforts by the US administration to ameliorate this process have not succeeded., Indeed the US statement notes that the Draft Outcomes Document ‘has gone from bad to worse, and is not salvageable’,” Mr Goot said.

“The Australian Jewish community wholeheartedly endorses the US statement. The Governments of the USA, Israel and Canada have now announced that they will not attend the Durban 11 Conference. Durban 11 undermines the very purpose of the UN and does great damage to this important institution. We are hopeful that the Australian government will announce that Australia will also not attend the conference”.

“The world’s leading democratic nations must now speak with one voice to make it clear that any document that emerges from this tainted Conference lacks their support and is utterly devoid of moral authority”, Mr Goot said.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry is the representative organization of the Australian Jewish community.

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