



## Oral Statement to the Durban Review Conference Geneva, 24 April 2009

**Mr. President,**

Like many we had hoped that the Durban Review Conference would accomplish its objectives and not only re-affirm the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA), but also evaluate progress and strengthen its implementation. Today we feel that little of that has been achieved. We recognize the importance of identifying and addressing general cross-cutting themes and universal principles by which racial discrimination can be addressed. At the same time, we must be aware of the fact that racial discrimination is not an abstract problem, but a practical one, which dramatically affects the lives of millions of real human beings. Therefore, any sincere effort at improving our programs to combat racism and racial discrimination must ensure that none of the DDPA-specified victims of racial discrimination are excluded from the evaluation process and related outcome documents.

The DDPA, which was adopted by consensus and overwhelmingly endorsed by the General Assembly, identified the Palestinian people as one group of victims of racism and racial discrimination, expressed concern about their plight under foreign occupation, and reconfirmed their inalienable right to self-determination, sovereignty and refugee return.

The Palestinian people is not only a victim of “foreign occupation” but also of apartheid and colonialism. Former Special Rapporteur John Dugard noted that **Israel's protracted military occupation is not an interim measure that maintains law and order following armed conflict, but rather a regime of a colonizing power under the guise of occupation, which includes features of apartheid**, such as: the fragmentation of the OPT, the construction of the Wall, a system of separate roads, closure and permits which restrict freedom of movement on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity and religion. Thus, **apartheid and colonialism currently still exist in the present and must be addressed. They cannot be relegated only to the past.**

Israel's discriminatory policies and practices are directed not only against the Palestinian population in the OPT, but also towards Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinian refugees. Israel's assertion of control over the maximum amount of land with a minimum number of Palestinian people, mainly through forcible displacement and dispossession, are rendering a just two-state solution impossible.

It is evident, therefore, that the DDPA and the Durban Review Process have so far failed to halt the institutionalised racial discrimination practiced against the Palestinian people. This is manifest in the recent war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the 1.5 million Palestinians living in the occupied Gaza Strip.

We call upon the member States to recognize that the goals of the DDPA require the inclusion of the Palestinian people within this process until these goals are achieved (quote): “a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region in which all peoples shall co-exist and enjoy equality, justice and internationally recognized human rights, and security.”