



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## Recommendation adopted on 28 January 2009 CONF/PLE(2009)REC4

### The Durban Review Conference “to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg on 28 January 2009,

- **Warmly welcoming** the opportunity offered by the Durban Review Conference (taking place in Geneva from 20 to 24 April 2009) to further the struggle against old and new types of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
- **Taking note** of the place given to NGOs in the preparation of the Conference, as well as in the Conference itself;
- **Bearing in mind** the relevant texts and work of the Council of Europe;
- **Aligning** itself with the joint statement made by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the Director of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency which emphasises “*Do not miss the opportunity to step up the global fight against racism and discrimination!*”, and endorsing the aforesaid Statement [[CommDH/Speech\(2008\)18](#)]

### Trusts that the Geneva Conference will bear in mind the following points

1. Racist and xenophobic attitudes arise from the fear that comes when one knows little or nothing of the other.

One challenge, which has grown considerably since the Durban Conference (2001), arises from the intermingling of populations and the resulting linguistic and religious plurality in areas which used to be more homogenous.

One of the essential ways of combating discrimination and intolerance is to develop social diversity, struggle against ghettoisation and create conditions that encourage contact between people of different cultures and origins.

The little known work of numerous NGOs at grass roots level forges strong links between peoples of different cultures and social groups and enables them to meet, understand and help one another.

2. Bringing people together in this way is even more important in times of crisis, particularly when there is open conflict.

Many NGOs and forums maintain open dialogue between opposing parties which gives them the possibility to meet no longer as in a situation of direct confrontation, but as people who recognise one another’s common humanity.

3. Intercultural dialogue, as defined by the Council of Europe’s White Paper, should become a major guiding principle for policy makers and civil society.

Attitudes of mutual respect can not, however, just be taken for granted which is the reason that both the White Paper and the ongoing experience of NGOs stress the need for education and training. Such education should include teaching on human rights, democratic citizenship and the acquisition of intercultural skills.

4. Any reason for any type of discrimination or stigmatisation of a category of people is repellent and must be actively opposed.

This is why we do not wish a list to be drawn up of the different forms of “racism”.

When considering the situation in the Middle East or any other conflictual situation in the world, there is absolutely no reason for distinguishing between the victims of discrimination and hatred on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, religion or any other factor. All human beings, regardless of the groups to which they belong, must have their rights protected.

5. It should be remembered that those who are victims of discrimination need to be supported and represented by qualified NGOs in legal actions they undertake to have their rights recognised.

**Along these lines the INGO Conference calls upon**

- The Council of Europe
- The Member States of the Council of Europe
- The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights
- The Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference
- NGOs

**To be vigilant in seeing that the sufferings of any victims of racism or discrimination are not used for political ends;**

**To respect the inviolable, individual and universal nature of human rights.**

**To ensure that the work of the Conference and its final Declaration are based on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other similar international instruments.**