
The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination,
Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR)

Another UN Sponsored Carnival?

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), which took place in Durban, South Africa, between August 31 and September 7, 2001, was mired in controversy before it ever began.¹ Two full weeks before the conference opened the *New York Times* and the *New Republic* were already using terms such as “mean spirited”, “virtually meaningless” and “irrelevant” to describe it.²

The WCAR was intended by its organizers to be a historic gathering that would force the issue of the importance of tackling racism, xenophobia and related intolerance to the top of the international political agenda. Instead the WCAR has since been branded by the mainstream media as everything from a “total failure”, to a “farce”, to a “theatre of the absurd”. Making reference to anti-Semitic and anti-American sentiments aired during the conference, others, questioning whether the world was filled with more or less hatred and bias as a result of this gathering, described it as an outright “outburst of hate” and the “ideological prologue to Sept 11”.³

The public image of the WCAR was in many ways doomed from the beginning as a result of negative press coverage and an obsessive focus on the divisive ‘Zionism is racism’ issue, which in reality occupied only a small fraction of the conference’s proceedings. Also on the table were a broad range of issues including reparations for slavery and colonialism, caste discrimination in South Asia, equal rights for ethnic minorities, migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, and

¹ The conference went past its official last day into September 8 in a last minute bid to achieve compromise over language pertaining to the Middle East issue. In the end, reference was made to “the plight of Palestinian people under foreign occupation”, but no specific reference was made to Israel’s or any other government’s human rights practices. Human Rights Watch. (2002)

² Polakow-Sunranksy, Sasha. (2001, Oct. 4)

³ Puddington, Arch. (2001)

people afflicted with HIV/AIDS, to self-determination for indigenous peoples.⁴ Largely overshadowed in the mainstream media by the American and Israeli delegation withdrawals, it remains uncertain what, if any, positive outcomes were made with regards to the above mentioned.

Negative publicity surrounding a UN conference is not a novel phenomenon. Anand and Foster remark that the conferences of the 1990s have been marred in much the same way: “If the media are to be believed, no good comes from the UN global conferences, far too much money is spent, it is the predictable “jet set” that fly from one conference to another, and bickering continues over the same issues”.⁵ For Jacques Fomerand however, the full magnitude of a UN global conference can only be fully appreciated in a long-term perspective by looking at the intensity of energies that it mobilized and unleashed.⁶ Using the framework he provides, the current essay will tentatively discuss the WCAR’s shortcomings and achievements. It will be argued that, contrary to popular perception, the WCAR did have some positive outcomes, notably with respect to fulfilling information and normative functions.

SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE WCAR

Some 18,810 individuals from 170 countries, including 16 heads of State, 58 foreign ministers and 44 ministers, and nearly 7000 non-governmental representatives and over 1300 media representatives attended the Durban conference.⁷ The conference was spearheaded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson. By convening such a grand-scale process of social mobilization, Robinson had intended for the conference to push the issues of

⁴ Polakow-Sunransky, Sasha. (2001, Oct. 4)

⁵ Foster, John W. and Anita Anand Ed. (1999) p. 111.

⁶ Fomerand, Jacques. (1996) pp. 372-373.

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racism, xenophobia and related intolerance to the top of the international political agenda. In typical UN fashion, the WCAR was also meant to produce a declaration of intent with an accompanying plan of action upon which all governments present would agree. Thus, states would have at their disposal concrete practical steps for action to improve the situation in their countries and that could be monitored by NGOs, in a similar way that the agreements reached at the 1995 Beijing conference had promoted and done so much for women's rights.⁸

Durban was preceded by two such world conferences, one in 1978 and the other in 1983. The official nomenclature of those previous conferences, "World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination", was expanded for Durban to include "xenophobia and related forms of intolerance" as a way to get to the ethnic and religious turmoil that has marred the post-Cold War era.⁹ It was also hoped that Durban would succeed where its forebears had failed: at the time objectionable language condemning Zionism and the apartheid policies of South Africa seriously undermined both conferences, with the US boycotting them altogether. By contrast, the discussions and debates of Durban were intended to be practically oriented, where states would agree on concrete measures and steps to be taken towards the eradication of racism and racial discrimination. The international community agreed upon five themes that would be addressed in Durban, namely: the sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism; victims; strategies to achieve full and effective equality; provision of effective remedies, recourse, redress and measures of prevention and; education aimed at the eradication of racism and racial discrimination.

⁷ UNHCHR. (2001) p. 2.

⁸ Human Rights Watch. (2002)

⁹ Muwakkil, Salim. (2001, Oct. 1)

THE WCAR AND CIVIL SOCIETY

It was perhaps the heavy involvement of NGOs at every stage of its planning that most set Durban apart from its 1978 and 1983 predecessors, which were mainly limited to state actors. In the two years preceding the Durban conference, a series of regional NGO preparatory¹⁰ and networking¹¹ meetings were established to parallel governmental and expert meetings. The decision to divide the world into four regional groupings, for both the governmental and the NGO preparatory meetings, ensured that all cultures and perspectives were respected, and was intended to avoid the charge of relativism in the planning of the conference agenda.¹² It must be noted that for the victims of racism, the regional preparatory meetings represented an unprecedented opportunity to network and elaborate regional declarations and programmes of action that formed the basis of Durban's NGO Forum Draft Declaration and Programme of Action.

The NGO Forum itself also represented a radical departure from the two earlier conferences. Between August 28 and September 1, 2001, nearly 7000 civil society actors met in Durban to finalize the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action which was to be presented to the governmental delegations.¹³ In her discussion of the role of non-state actors in conference diplomacy, Lisa Gelman remarks that NGO forums have six additional functions, notably to:

1. Enable non-state actors to strategize and coordinate their lobbying efforts at the official conference;

¹⁰ 10-11 October 2000, Strasbourg, France; 3-4 December 2000, Santiago, Chile; 20-21 January 2001, Dakar, Senegal; 17-18 February 2001, Tehran, Iran.

¹¹ 15-18 November 2000, Warsaw, Poland; 8-13 January 2001, Botswana; 13-16 March 2001, Quito, Ecuador; 5-8 February 2001, Amman, Jordan; 27-29 April 2001, Katmandu, Nepal.

¹² Human Rights Watch. (2002)

¹³ It must be noted that a Youth Summit also took place as an integral part of the NGO Forum between August 26 and August 28, 2001. Five hundred young people from all four regions discussed the particular ways in which racism and racial discrimination affects them. A separate Youth Summit Declaration and Plan of Action was presented to government delegations. www.hri.ca/racism/youth

2. Provide a global platform for non-state actors that are marginalized and oppressed;
3. Allow non-state actors with similar interests to network and exchange;
4. Push the boundaries of the regime by debating topics that the government delegates are not able to discuss;
5. Media coverage of global forums educates the public about the official negotiations and the issue; and
6. Establish a set of follow-up measures and coordination procedures for non-state actors to pursue after the conference.¹⁴

The extent to which civil society actors were able to successfully accomplish these specific functions during the WCAR will be addressed below within the more general framework set out by Fomerand.

1. THE INFORMATION FUNCTION OF UN CONFERENCES: Creation, Dissemination, and Sharing of Knowledge at the WCAR

Fomerand maintains that the information function of UN conferences is self-evident. This is not to say that this is an automatic or easy process. Serious barriers impeded the actors at the WCAR from reaching consensus over contentious and divisive issues. The International Council on Human Rights Policy maintains that, as a result, relationships – between governments, between governments and NGOs, and among NGOs – became embittered and mistrustful during the WCAR.¹⁵ It will be hypothesized that this divisiveness over the Israeli/Palestinian issue blocked important channels of communication, between NGOs, civil society and government delegations, and between civil society and the general public.

¹⁴ Gelman, Lisa. (2000) p. 337.

¹⁵ International Council on Human Rights Policy. (2001) p. 3.

NGO-NGO Networking

To regard civil society at international conferences as a singular cohesive actor is inaccurate. Clark et al. are quick to dismiss the idea, pointing to the divisiveness of NGOs present at international conferences on the most effective procedures to follow: networking or lobbying.¹⁶ While the first group's main objective is to network with like-minded NGOs and draft an alternative Declaration and Programme of Action, the second group's *raison d'être* is to explicitly confront and embarrass governments. While Clark et al. view these divergent aims as largely complementary they are nevertheless divisive.

Disagreement over the substantive content of the WCAR NGO Forum declaration was emblematic of this rift. Provocative anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist language was deemed inappropriate by many representatives, prompting delegates from more than 80 NGOs, from 35 countries, to issue a joint statement denouncing the process and adoption of the NGO Forum Declaration and Programme of Action as neither transparent nor democratic.¹⁷ Moreover, the final NGO Forum declaration provoked sharp criticism from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Though these organizations have consistently condemned Israeli human rights violations in Palestine, the use of the word genocide to describe them was deemed inflammatory and inaccurate by international law.¹⁸ On the other end of the spectrum were those who celebrated the NGO Declaration as a people's victory. To Samir Amin of the Third World Forum, Durban was one in a chain of encouraging developments including Seattle, Nice, Gothenburg, Genoa and Porto Alegre.¹⁹

Though NGOs were clearly polarized into different camps, often mirroring North/South

¹⁶ Clark, Ann Marie et al. (1998) p. 5.

¹⁷ Eastern and Central Europe. (2001, Sept. 2)

¹⁸ Sadasivam, Bharati. (2001, Sept. 18) p. 40.

divisions, information sharing between them did occur nevertheless. The following statement made by a consortium of Canadian NGOs attending the WCAR largely supports this:

Despite that our expectations regarding the WCAR process were not fully satisfied, [Canadian] NGOs have learned much about the different problems and realities which are faced by peoples from the four corners of the earth. [We] leave this conference with a more global vision of equality, and with new tools of education and understanding in the struggle against racism.²⁰

Similarly, Human Rights Watch reports that “groups seeking to break the bonds of discrimination forged new alliances across continents with hitherto unknown partners”.²¹ So while some NGOs at the WCAR disagreed on very specific issues, they did so in a context of intense interaction and debate that was conducive to what Fomerand describes as the information function of UN conferences.

NGO-Government Lobbying

Non-governmental organizations are as a rule excluded from negotiations over the most important formal outcomes of conferences – the final declarations. Despite this, Gelman maintains that by sharing information and expertise and coordinating lobbying strategies, NGO networks are able to exert considerable influence above and beyond their weak formal status.²² The success of an estimated 4000 NGO representatives accredited to the intergovernmental end of the WCAR in lobbying and persuading government delegates to embrace the stances and positions adopted in the NGO Forum Declaration is doubtful considering the controversy surrounding the document.

Moshe More, Project Director of the WCAR NGO Forum Secretariat, expressed concern over the fact that the world media carried the message that Mary Robinson rejected the NGO Forum

¹⁹ Amin, Samir. (2001)

²⁰ Canadian Race Relations Foundation. (2001, Sept. 7)

²¹ Human Rights Watch. (2002)

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Declaration and Programme of Action. Instead he clarifies that the High Commissioner for Human Rights “expressed concerns about the language and said it would be difficult for her in her position to use it in the inter-governmental lobbying process or recommend it to governments”.²³ It remains that the High Commissioner’s statement and the media’s misrepresentation may have been sufficient to trivialize the NGO Forum Declaration and undermine the efforts of the NGO representatives who sought to promote it.

Thus far we have managed to avoid the issue of the United States delegation’s withdrawal from the conference. On 3 September, after four days of negotiations, the U.S. and Israel jointly withdrew their delegations to the World Conference, declaring that they had been unable to reach compromise with Arab countries and Palestine. What was the impact of this decision on information sharing between American decision-makers and civil society? Human Rights Watch maintains that any dialogue up to that moment ended abruptly:

The administration warned NGOs and governments that the conference should not lead to any new programs to combat racism, any new legal standards, any additional money to fund anti-racism efforts, or any follow-up. It warned the conference not to call for reparations for slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade or adopt language specifically criticizing Israel.²⁴

African-American activists present accused their government of using the Middle-East issue as a cover to avoid the conference’s second contentious issue, reparations for the slave trade.²⁵ Reparations for the slave trade and colonialism was also an extremely contentious issue for the Europeans. African governments however had managed to assure their European counterparts prior to the WCAR that they wanted remorse, investment and aid rather than reparations. Negotiations

²² Gelman, Lisa. (2000) p. 333.

²³ More, Moshe. (2001, Nov. 12)

²⁴ Human Rights Watch. (2002)

²⁵ The Economist. (2001, Sept. 8) p. 49.

took an unexpected turn however when American activists urged African countries, with some degree of success, to demand “restitution for their immense suffering” and a “recognition of slavery as a crime against humanity”.²⁶ The resulting impasse will be further addressed below.

The preceding example is, notwithstanding, evidence that despite significant impeding factors, namely the High Commissioner’s unwillingness to endorse the NGO Forum Declaration and American intransigence, NGO lobbying efforts did enjoy some degree of success.

Media Coverage of the WCAR

In his discussion of the information function of international conferences, Fomerand neglects to elicit the role of the media in disseminating information. Instead the author limits his discussion to advances in information technology, such as the internet and the UN Non-governmental Liaison Service which issues publications, pamphlets, brochures, and bulletins on UN conferences preparation, outcomes and follow-up. While it is true that these are valuable resources, they are reserved for members of the interested public. By contrast, Gelman acknowledges the importance of media coverage in drawing the attention of the general public to international forums and issues raised therein.

International conferences have in the recent years received unprecedented media publicity. The 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women was covered by some 3245 international media representatives. To a lesser extent, at the World Conference Against Racism, more than 1300 media representatives received accreditation. A question that arises is whether this coverage was comprehensive and whether it provided a platform for otherwise marginalized groups.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 49.

The introduction of this essay alluded to the overall negative coverage that the WCAR received. According to Polakow-Sunranksy, attention given in the international media to the US-Israeli departure and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not only negative but grossly disproportionate. It eclipsed the demands of hundreds of other groups and sidelined numerous agenda items.²⁷ Similarly, Avvy Go criticizes the Canadian media of its less than all inclusive coverage:

... the real damage that the media did by focusing solely on the issues of Zionism and Palestine was that it worked to undermine the entire WCAR process. It did so by ignoring the many legitimate and real concerns brought forward by victims of racism and their advocates...²⁸

Similar comments about media coverage as being “unbalanced” and “lacking seriousness” sparked one of the liveliest discussions during a parallel panel discussion organized by OHCHR and UNESCO. At this event Mary Robinson, admonishing the media’s narrow focus, stressed that “civil society has taken the time to bring a rich diversity of difficult issues to our attention”.²⁹

Finally, Polakow-Sunranksy comments that following the US-Israeli departure, the final days of the conference received very little coverage.³⁰ Thus it would appear that by no fault of their own, vulnerable groups missed an important and largely unique chance to push their interests into the world’s headlines. Thus as vehicle for information sharing, in the context of the WCAR, the international media can be described as unreliable and haphazard at best.

2. THE MONITORING AND EARLY WARNING FUNCTION OF UN CONFERENCES: OHCHR’s New Anti-Discrimination Unit

²⁷ Polakow-Sunranksy, Sasha. (2001, Oct. 4)

²⁸ Go, Avvy. (undated)

²⁹ UNHCHR. (2001) p. 9.

³⁰ Polakow-Sunranksy, Sasha. (2001, Oct. 4) p. 3.

Fomerand notes that structures for monitoring and early-warning purposes, if non-existent or deemed inadequate, may be established or strengthened as a result of a decision adopted at or originating in a global conference.³¹ To this end, during the WCAR, Mary Robinson proposed the creation of an anti-discrimination unit to function under the auspices of her office (OHCHR). Delegates at the WCAR largely endorsed the High Commissioner's initiative and therefore included it in the conference's Programme of Action.

The Anti-Discrimination Unit (ADU) started operating, on an interim basis, on 1 December 2001 with the following mandate:

- Compile and prepare annual progress reports on actions taken by governments, national human rights institutions, treaty bodies and civil society organizations, towards implementing the Programme of Action;
- Assist the five independent experts who will help implement the Programme of Action;
- Promote and strengthen active liaison and consultations on Durban follow-up with NGOs and other civil society organizations, as well as with UN agencies and other intergovernmental bodies;
- Initiate and support awareness-building projects with various institutions; and
- Establish a database of good practices in addressing racism and racial discrimination.³²

It must be noted that the ADU falls short of what Fomerand describes as new structures that alter the architecture of the UN, such as were adopted in the areas of food, health and the environment. Moreover, the ADU's monitoring functions are relatively weak, limited to recording advances made towards the implementation of the Programme of Action. The ADU is fundamentally nothing more than a follow-up mechanism to Durban, and temporary at that.

³¹ Fomerand, Jacques. (1996) p. 368.

³² UNHCHR. (2001) p. 5.

3. THE NORMATIVE FUNCTION OF UN CONFERENCES: Regime renewal and collective legitimization at the WCAR

Regime Renewal

Though Fomerand does not explicitly use the term “regime” anywhere in his essay, he does acknowledge the potential that international conferences have in generating and/or sustaining a “network of concern”.³³ Gelman goes one step further in maintaining that of one the most important functions of international conferences rests in their ability to create, institutionalize, and reinvigorate regimes surrounding a particular problem issue. According to Gelman, international conferences accomplish this in three ways:

1. Global conferences place issues on the global agenda by attracting the attention of states, their citizens, the media, and non-state actors to an issue;
2. At global conferences delegates debate and negotiate a consensus on the principles and norms that will guide the regime between conferences; and
3. Global conferences disseminate principles and norms throughout the international system.³⁴

Assuming that an “anti-racism regime” existed before the WCAR, did the Durban conference reinvigorate it – and if so, how? While there is sufficient reason to question whether the inability of governments and NGOs alike to forge a common front against racism (coupled by widely publicized images of participants engaging in behaviours they had come to Durban to denounce – intransigence and intolerance) weakened the resolve of the anti-racism movement, the opposite will be argued.

³³ Fomerand, Jacques. (1996) p. 370.

³⁴ Gelman, Lisa. (2000) p. 11.

First and foremost it must be recognized that the WCAR led to an unprecedented mobilization of the victims of racism from communities around the world, both in the regional preparatory process and at Durban. Some 18,810 individuals directly participated in these activities. Human Rights Watch maintains that this alone was enough to reinvigorate many community, national, and regional anti-racism movements.³⁵ Secondly, one of the most significant outcomes of the conferences was that participants collectively set the goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by 2005. Moreover, participants called for additional resources for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which monitors the implementation of the convention. In this respect, participants reaffirmed the significance and saliency of the convention. Equally, the Anti-Discrimination Unit, however limited in mandate, will provide valuable follow-up to Durban and monitor action taken towards implementation of the WCAR Programme of Action. Lastly, a General Assembly resolution has been proposed that would provide a five-year follow-up to Durban (WCAR +5). Taken together, these developments strongly suggest that Durban did not lead to the demise or significantly weaken the resolve of the anti-racism movement.³⁶

Collective Legitimization

International conferences have the added function of legitimizing claims that were up to that point considered unacceptable. Fomerand writes that “to place a particular issue on the agenda of the international community in such a manner is tantamount to acknowledging the existence of a problem to be acted upon”.³⁷ As such, non-governmental organizations may utilize international

³⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2002)

³⁶ Moreover, Laurie Wiseberg, former head of the OHCHR’s WCAR liaison unit, maintains that far from being overtaken by these events, September 11 has made the anti-discrimination agenda even more important. (2001)

³⁷ Fomerand, Jacques. (1996) p. 370.

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conferences to air out grievances and highlight their plight in a bid to gain legitimacy. Three such instances stand out in Durban: caste discrimination, the legacies of the slave trade and colonialism, and indigenous rights.

The success of the Dalits, the so-called “untouchables” of India and other Asian countries, in raising the issue of caste discrimination at the WCAR is a case in point of the legitimizing function of international conferences. Despite India’s best efforts to prevent the issue of caste discrimination from being discussed, NGOs representing the Dalits were successful in raising the issue. Others have maintained that it was India’s efforts to keep caste out of the final conference documents that effectively stimulated international press coverage of the issue.³⁸

Though the WCAR delegates did not explicitly recognize caste-based discrimination in the final document, the awareness generated by the issue sent a clear message that international programs were required to remedy its consequences and to establish practical measures to facilitate its abolition. Mary Robinson had this to say about the issue: “they have a basis now to continue to try to press the discrimination that they face”.³⁹

A second issue, which sparked international attention, was that of reparations for slavery and colonialism. As alluded to earlier, this was one of the most contentious issues raised during the conference and as such received significant attention. Those arguing in favour of reparations for slavery and colonialism pointed to the legal precedents set by Germany after First World War, to Japanese Americans and Canadians interned during the Second World War and to victims of the Nazi Holocaust. It was argued that much of the poverty and economic imbalances that exist in the

³⁸ Human Rights Watch. (2002)

³⁹ UN Wire. (2001, Sept. 10)

world today have their roots in these legacies and reparation should be made accordingly.

Some African delegates, seeking to diminish European and American anxieties about possible legal ramifications embodied in the future WCAR declaration, pushed instead for acknowledgement that colonialism, imperialism, and slavery were largely responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa instead of reparations per se. As such these “moderates” were largely successful in having the WCAR Declaration recognize that slavery and the slave trade “are a crime against humanity and should always have been so” and acknowledges that states have a “moral obligation” to “take appropriate and effective measures to halt and reverse the lasting consequences of those practices”. This, according to Human Rights Watch, represented an historic recognition of the criminality of slavery and the moral obligation to repair its lasting damage.⁴⁰

Finally, though perhaps minor by contrast to the two examples cited above, indigenous peoples succeeded in having their group delineated in the WCAR Declaration in the plural form. Not only was this a recognition of their diversity but it was also a symbolic recognition of their rights including the right to self determination – which by all accounts was a very significant victory for indigenous peoples. It is important to note however that the paragraph reads: “‘indigenous peoples’ is in the context of, and without prejudice to the outcome, ongoing international negotiations on texts dealing specifically with that issue and cannot be construed as having any implications as to rights under international law”.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch. (2002)

⁴¹ WCAR Declaration and Programme of Action, Paragraph 24.

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The framework provided by Fomerand proved to be an invaluable tool in scratching beyond the WCAR's surface. From the general public's point of view, relying primarily on media accounts, there appears to be countless reasons to deplore the WCAR proceedings and to dismiss it as yet another UN sponsored carnival. A closer look however enables one to appreciate some of the more subtle positive outcomes of the WCAR.

Chief among these is what Fomerand refers to as the information function. It was found that while civil society and governmental actors disagreed between and among themselves on contentious issues, they did so in a context of intense interaction and debate. As per the media's role as a far-reaching purveyor of information, it was argued that its coverage was largely disproportionate, focusing primarily on areas of contention, largely obscuring other issues of the agenda.

As per the creation of the Anti-Discrimination Unit (ADU) subsequent to the WCAR, it was argued its monitoring function and early-warning functions were weak as it is mandated with monitoring the implementation of the WCAR's Programme of Action. This body may in the end however prove valuable in sustaining and strengthening what was referred to as the "anti-racism regime". Renewed commitments to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial, one of the main foundation stones of this regime, gives credence to what Fomerand refers to as the normative function of UN conferences. Finally, the legitimization of the problems of caste discrimination, the legacies of the slave trade and colonialism, and the symbolic acknowledgement of indigenous peoples in the plural form, are important victories in their own right. It must also be recognized that the text adopted in Durban is historic in that it sets out these issues in plain, unequivocal language for the first time in a document of this kind, agreed to by the international

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community.

Some Final Notes

A discussion of the WCAR would not be complete without some mention of the implication of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and of Western governments in what occurred in Durban. With this respect it is important to note that in a preparatory meeting held in Tehran, regional delegates were permitted to insert anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic formulations in the official declaration. Thus, when the conference opened on August 31, delegates were confronted with an inflammatory draft declaration containing the anti-Israel language proposed in the Tehran meeting. Mary Robinson has conceded that she was to blame for any poor preparation. A research question that emerges from this is, considering the demise of the two previous World Conferences Against Racism over the 'Zionism is racism' question, is there no institutional memory with regards to UN conferences?

Finally, by sending junior delegations, Western governments gave the message that they were not taking the conference seriously. With this regard, it is interesting to note that while Washington contributed \$6 million to the 1995 Beijing conference, it provided just \$250,000 for the Durban affair.⁴²

⁴² Muwakkil, Salim. (2001, Oct. 1)

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