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COMMENTS ON THE DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE OUTCOME DOCUMENT, JANUARY 2009  
DRAFT

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Durban Review Outcome Document. APA is recognized with special consultative status at the United Nations and is accredited to the UN Department of Public Information as a non-governmental organization (NGO). APA's representatives interact with the NGO community at the United Nations in New York, Geneva, and Vienna and APA serves on the CONGO Executive Committee.

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes 150,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. Through our 53 professional divisions of psychology and affiliations with 59 state, territorial, and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education, and human welfare.

APA was one of the many (NGOs) that sent a delegation to the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. The primary goal of APA's interventions at that time, based on the *APA Resolution on Racism and Racial Discrimination: A Policy Statement in Support of the Goals of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance*, was to encourage NGOs and government representatives to acknowledge the psychological dimensions and effects of racism and to promote remedies and strategies that involve the use of psychological / mental health data and interventions. The reason for this is that health and mental health status are important indicators of manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances, and are important measures to use in assessing measures to combat these challenges.

APA's interventions were reflected in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which included a number of references to mental health as well as "health/healthcare" to be inclusive of physical and mental health. Specifically, the Declaration and Programme of Action requests states to adopt policies and give impetus to programmes that address mental health of indigenous women and girls (18); requests providing access to health care as a basic human right [for migrants] (30, 33); urges states to prevent racial discrimination in healthcare (49); urges the collection of mental health status in data collection efforts (92); urges states to fulfill the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (109) and to establish national programmes to promote access to health care for victims of discrimination and without discrimination (100, 101, 110); promotes education on health and mental health and on human rights for public officials (111, 133); encourages international organizations to address the impact of discrimination on physical and mental health status (154); and calls for investment in the infrastructure for programmes to address discrimination, especially through health infrastructure, capacity building, and education, training and cultural development (158); . that urged states to fulfill the right of everyone to the highest standards of physical and mental health (109). In addition APA applauded urging states to recognize the challenges of developing a harmonious multiracial and multicultural society by developing an international centre for policy studies and development and by urging states to adopt social development policies to promote disparity reduction.

At the same time that APA worked to accomplish its goals of educating about any being inclusive of health and mental health in the Durban documents, it was aware of and deeply disturbed by the politicization of the conference and the use of the UN forum for political statements and advocacy. Thus

in commenting on the Durban Review document, APA is clear that although it supports the objectives as originally stated in the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, it deplores the politicization of the conference as it took place in 2001, particularly as related to anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments expressed both in word and in deed. APA urges States and the Durban Review organizers to help ensure that the Durban Review conference documents do not include clearly political statements concerning specific countries or groups, and is concerned that the preliminary documents do contain such statements. APA sincerely hopes that the Durban Review Process will focus on combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and related intolerances to ALL peoples and underscore the psychological and mental health sources, processes and consequences of racism, discrimination and intolerances for ALL victimized groups.

APA has read the current draft outcome document with special interest in ascertaining whether inclusion of health and mental health was maintained and in ascertaining whether education, understanding and prevention programmes were retained as a focus. APA is gratified to see mention of health, specifically concerning monitoring, best practices and positive measures, and makes specific suggestions below concerning additional inclusion of the importance of health/ mental health and health/mental indicators in addressing racism in all its manifestations.

In this regard, APA applauds the continued inclusion of multiple vulnerable groups, including women and girls, especially victims of trafficking, individuals with HIV/AIDS, and in including sexual orientation as indicating a vulnerable group. APA notes that the document makes little mention of individuals with mental, physical and emotional challenges. For purposes of exposition we refer to these individuals as those with “disability.” We urge that this group be included under the rubric of discrimination, with a demand for action by the UN and all nations to eliminate all legal, linguistic, educational, and physical barriers to their ability to function fully as human beings. Although the inclusion of Paragraph 214 on protecting the human rights of people with disabilities is appropriate, this pernicious form of discrimination needs to be referenced in other places in the document. Racism, at its heart, is fueled by the view that the “other” is less than human. Discrimination against people with disabilities shares this essential feature. Furthermore, there is a reasonably large literature on people with particular disabilities forming separate cultures (e.g., Linton, 1998; Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1997; Pollard, 1996). We must not forget that the disabled are among the most vulnerable, especially in times of social stress. Specific requests for inclusion are addressed below under specific additions and edits.

APA also applauds the statements concerning a need for documentation and reliable statistics but believes that health and mental health need to receive stronger emphasis than they currently receive in the present document. The negative health and mental health consequences of racism – to both victim and perpetrator are well known and any attempt to address racism, xenophobia, discrimination and related intolerances must address these crucial aspects. In this light, the comments noting the role of racism as a stressor and sometimes cause of traumatic stress (Paragraph XX) are important to emphasize.

APA also applauded the focus on developing proactive programmes and of engaging civic society in these endeavors. APA strongly believes that education, not prohibition, will promote more stable and sustainable long-term change in both attitudes and behavior.

In the following we outline specific changes or additional considerations on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. We also provide references for specific items at the end of the document.

## **Section I-A: Sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**

APA believes that the broad approach taken in the document is appropriate, especially noting that discrimination violates basic human rights. APA also believes that promoting respect for multiculturalism is an important focus. Under sources and causes APA has two additional comments:

Paragraph 17: Disability status is often the basis for discrimination and, in combination with other sources of discrimination creates a pernicious form of discrimination. Mention of disability can be added to the grounds for discrimination. For example, in Paragraph 17 to colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, add “*or disability status*”.

Paragraph 26: APA is concerned that Paragraph 26 is incompatible with the sentiments expressed in Paragraphs 23, 24, 25 and 27 and believes that this paragraph could lead to the denial of basic human rights of freedom of expression or expression of religion.

Paragraphs 30-34: APA supports the deletion of specific references to specific religions (as noted in Paragraph 26) or specific States (for example in paragraphs 30-34) because the purpose of the Durban Conference and Durban Declaration was to speak on global issues related to racism without singling out any country or any group. Mentioning one group of necessity omits concurrent groups undergoing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other intolerance, including genocide, suppression of dissent, rape as a political weapon or denial of women’s rights or rights based on sexual orientation.

New Paragraph: APA recommends inclusion of a statement that racist incidents themselves are a source of stress and in some cases traumatic stress can result in symptoms such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance dependence and suicidality. References to support this addition are included in the appendix.

## **Section I-B. Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**

Paragraph 37: APA applauds the inclusion of health in the list of important inequalities to be addressed by States.

Paragraph 54: APA applauds the inclusion of violence against women and in particular the psychological consequences of trafficking. We provide references for research that document the impact of sex trafficking and slavery (appendix below).

Paragraphs 60-61. APA applauds attention to multiple discriminations and notes that there is psychological science research on the sequelae of multiple forms of discrimination. APA supports increased specificity in this section, on two accounts.

New Paragraph: Disability status is one core example of double discrimination, and should be included explicitly as an example. This might be added to Paragraph 61 or a new Paragraph inserted. Reference to research underlying the prevalence and effects of this kind of double discrimination, especially for those of African descent are provided in the appendix.

Paragraph 62-66: APA applauds the paragraphs on violence against women and children and offers supporting citations in the appendix.

Paragraph 68: APA applauds including discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS in the document

Paragraph 69: APA applauds including sexual orientation discrimination in the document

New Paragraph: APA supports the addition of a section of vulnerable populations defined by disability status, and is concerned about the lack of mention of discrimination against those with physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges. Discrimination and xenophobia related to this

population is ubiquitous. They are the first group in all societies to be victimized by any form of dehumanization. All discrimination from language to laws to curb and stairs, as well as the emotional barriers of fear and pity, directly impact individuals with disabilities. The institutionalized "disabled" was the first population victimized by the Holocaust and the majority of seriously disabled were institutionalized, as they still are in many cultures. All genocides victimize the easiest and immediately expendable individuals, the "disabled" and then women and children. Paradoxically, genocides, as all wars, repopulate society and culture with individuals who have become "the disabled: physical, emotional, and/or cognitive. There is a need to include the disabled population under the rubric of discrimination, with a demand for action by the UN and all nations to eliminate all legal, linguistic, educational, and physical barriers to their ability to function fully as human beings.

### **Section 1- C: Measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance at all levels**

Paragraph 73: APA applauds the inclusion of monitoring and data collection and especially applauds the including of access to health services as a human development indicator.

Paragraph 73: APA also recommends adding health and mental health status to the categories of data collected.

Paragraph 73: APA recommends adding disability status to the list of indicators measured.

### **Section 3: Promotion of the universal ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination...**

Paragraph 133 : APA endorses the call for collaborations between States and civil society in assessing progress in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance; APA recommends adding to this a call for collaboration between the States and the local and international science community in providing data and models for understanding how to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

### **Section 4: Identification and Sharing of best practices achieved at the national, regional and international levels in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**

Paragraph 147: APA applauds the inclusion of health in the areas for which best practices are to be solicited.

Paragraphs 187, 188, 189 : APA applauds the call for education to combat and ameliorate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other intolerance. From many decades of research we know that attitude change is most effectively gained through increased education, not coercion.

Paragraph 198: APA applauds the inclusion of positive steps such as increasing access to health and mental health services

Paragraph 245: APA supports statements to increase inclusion of civil society in the UN system to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

## Appendix : References

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