Mr. Chairman,

We thank the Secretary General for his reports under the agenda items 103 and 104, on "Elimination of racism and racial discrimination" and "Right of peoples to self-determination" respectively. We also thank the relevant Special Rapporteurs for their presentations to this Committee. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Qatar in his capacity as the Chairman of the Group of 77 under the Agenda Item 103.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of the Secretary-General on global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance focusses on activities undertaken by States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, other United Nations bodies, specialised agencies, international and regional organisations, national human rights institutions as well as non-governmental organisations in the comprehensive implementation of, and the follow-up to, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The report concludes that despite increasing involvement by different actors in the implementation of the recommendations of the World Conference, further determined efforts are required to combat the frequent manifestations of racial discrimination and xenophobia.

Mr. Chairman,

The study on political platforms which promote or incite racial discrimination submitted pursuant to the General Assembly resolution A/58/159 makes several observations and recommendations worthy of our study and further careful consideration. The study shows that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance have been on the increase in many parts of the developed world. New targets of discrimination such as immigrants, refugees and non-nationals have been added to the traditional victims of these scourges. The study also points out to the grave danger posed to the democratic systems in Europe and elsewhere by the influence of the extreme right ideologies on traditionally democratic parties. The atmosphere overlaid by the war on terrorism in the post-September 11 era has created a new dynamic by tending to consider traditional victims of racial discrimination as ‘terrorist-breeding’ groups. The study calls on States to exercise greater control over racist and xenophobic statements by
political parties or other ideological movements, and cautions against allowing pleas based on freedom of expression for justifying incitements and intimidations of this kind. Laws should be enacted by the governments concerned to prohibit any party or movement from promoting racist and xenophobic ideas. The study also calls for prohibiting Internet sites with racist content and introducing monitoring procedures to this effect.

The study on political platforms makes recommendations for dealing with the problem in the long term by instituting an early earning system and preventive mechanism by a systematic effort. This would involve collection of information and data, documentation of incidents, movements and propaganda materials. Autonomous institutions will monitor instances of violence, discrimination and unfair treatment.

Mr. Chairman,

The interim report by the Special Rapporteur, presented in response to General Assembly resolution A/58/160, on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance makes a number of observations and recommendations which deserve further study. The Special Rapporteur mentions at one point that the current international climate is not conducive to efforts to combat racism and racial discrimination owing to the excessive focus on the fight against terrorism. He adds that the current climate has resulted not only in the marginalisation of efforts to combat discrimination but also the appearance of new forms of discrimination. He asserts that the international commitment to combating racial discrimination has been eroded by the priority accorded by the international community to counter-terrorism. We would underscore, in this context, the imperative of not allowing the fight against terrorism to overshadow the combat against all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

The report highlights yet another consequence of the war against terrorism: the scope of discrimination itself has grown more complex as race, or ethnicity, is conflated with religion and culture. It also shows how the ‘new ideological landscape’ has led to an alarming decline in the political and ethical determination and commitment to combat racism and racial discrimination.

The Special Rapporteur draws our attention in the interim report to the alarming rise in the number of Internet sites and hate-mails used for widespread dissemination of material by racist and xenophobic organisations. We agree with the recommendation to give consideration to elaborating an additional protocol to the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, for legal measures to combat the use of the Internet for racist or xenophobic purposes. Freedom of expression cannot be allowed to be used as an excuse for opposing regulations towards this end. The Durban Programme of Action had recommended that States should encourage media to adopt self-regulatory measures to enable them to combat the use of Internet for racist ends and that they should apply legal sanctions against any incitement to racial hatred.

We also agree with the recommendation calling on the General Assembly to focus its attention on the contemporary forms of racial discrimination which affect, in particular, immigrants, refugees and non-citizens and make them particularly vulnerable.

Mr. Chairman,

The recrudescence of racism and xenophobia in different parts of the developed world has been a disturbing phenomenon. The process of globalisation which has led to greater income inequalities, increase in unemployment and wider regional disparities has exacerbated racist, xenophobic and separatist tendencies. The discourse on the so-called ‘multiple discrimination’ should not be allowed to dilute the commitment and determination necessary to combat racial discrimination and intolerance. The careful nurturing of multi-cultural, democratic and pluralistic
traditions; inculcation of tolerance and respect for diversity; and implementation of appropriate educational and legislative strategies would perhaps provide the surest guarantee against racial prejudice and discrimination and xenophobia.

Mr. Chairman,

India had played a leading role in the historic struggle for decolonisation, and was at the forefront of the movement to secure the rights of peoples to self-determination so that those under alien subjugation, domination and exploitation could freely determine their own political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Self-determination has been recognised for long as the right of peoples of non-self governing colonies and trust territories to independence and self-government. Once exercised, the right of self-determination enables a whole people to freely choose their own form of Government and for all segments of society to collectively participate in national decision-making through representative, democratic institutions.

It is fundamental principle of law that with freedom, comes responsibility. No right, including right to self-determination, may be used as an instrument to promote subversion and erode the political cohesion or territorial integrity of Member States of the UN. The right to self-determination cannot be abused to encourage secession and undermine pluralistic and democratic states. Ethnic or religious segregation and chauvinism cannot be legitimised on the specious ground that societies need to be constituted on homogenous lines before they can be tolerant towards diversity and accept multi-culturalism. Such a view will only result in legitimising forces of extreme nationalism and narrow chauvinism. Furthermore, the right of self-determination cannot be invoked as a smoke screen for opportunistic attempts at territorial aggrandisement through terrorism and violence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.