**France, New Zealand Pull Out of Durban III Over Racism**

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The governments of France and New Zealand have announced that they will boycott this Thursday’s UN-sponsored Durban III anti-racism commemoration event because its planning has been plagued by anti- Semitism and racism.

The process “became more and more racist,” and “just like the Brits” the French foreign minister will not be attending it, a French diplomat told *The Jerusalem Post* from Paris on Saturday.

The aims of the anti-racism conference has “moved away from its original purpose,” the diplomat said.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said last week that 2001’s Durban I conference saw “open displays” of “deplorable anti-Semitism,” and it would be “wrong” to participate in such events.

“That’s why the UK will play no part in this conference,” Cameron said.

“France will not participate in the meeting planned in New York on the 22nd of September commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Durban conference against racism,” the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement sent to the Post.

“We remember that the previous meeting [in Geneva in 2009] led to an unacceptable diversion of the principles and values of the fight against racism. For this reason, as other partners of the European Union, France will not attend the commemoration.

“France reaffirms its attachment to the universality of human rights and its determination to fight against racism.

France remains strongly determined to pursue the collective efforts undertaken within the UN and other international bodies to fight efficiently against all forms of racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racial discrimination,” the statement continues.

In a statement issued to Post on Friday, New Zealand’s Foreign Minister Murray McCully said: “We remain concerned that the commemoration of the 2001 Durban Declaration could reopen the offensive and anti-Semitic debates which undermined the original World Conference [in Durban in 2001]. For these reasons, we have decided not to participate.

“New Zealand is fully committed to combating racism and we agree the UN should lead discussions on the elimination of racism. That is why we engaged constructively in the preparatory discussions in New York. However, in the end, the text is not one that we could support,” McCully said.

“New Zealand joins a growing list of countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Israel and the USA, that have also indicated they will not participate in the event.

“New Zealand did not participate in the Durban Review Conference held in 2009,” the statement continued.

Twelve of the UN’s 193 member nations have now pulled out of Durban III – those listed above as well as France and the Czech Republic.

Poland announced last week that it will not send a high-level delegation but has not formally withdrawn its participation.

Meanwhile, the Post has learned that Denmark, Romania and Finland plan to participate.

The Hungarian government is waiting for a unified European Union position, which is nonexistent at this stage because of the expanding list of EU countries that have pulled out of Durban III.

A spokeswoman for the Danish Embassy in Berlin told the Post on Friday that Denmark “is expected to participate in Durban III.”

In an e-mail to the Post on Friday, Gabriela Butu, a spokeswoman for the Romanian Embassy in Berlin, wrote, “Romania participated in both the 2001 World Conference against Racism (Durban) and 2009 Durban Review Conference (Geneva), based on its strong commitment to support international efforts in the field of combating discrimination, in all its forms and manifestations, as well as on its determination to contribute to the global fight against the scourge of racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

Zoltán Kovács, the Hungarian government’s international spokesman, told the Post on Friday, “Hungary shares the deep concern that despite many efforts, the objective to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has not yet been attained. Together with many partners, the European Union will remain engaged in efforts at the national, regional and international level to fight racism in an effective and sustainable manner.

“Therefore, Hungary participated in the 2001 Durban conference and also attended the 2009 follow-up event. As far as participation in the commemorative GA meeting is concerned, Hungary will consult its EU and NATO allies,” Kovács said.

Anu Pulkkinen, a spokeswoman for the Finnish Embassy in Berlin, wrote via e-mail to the Post: “Minister of Finance Jutta Urpilainen will participate in the event marking the 10th Anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, aimed at promoting tolerance and eliminating racism... At the same time Finland finds it regrettable, though, that the Durban process has been politicized in the course of years.”

Anne Bayefsky, an expert on international human rights law and lead organizer of a counter-conference ([www.durbanwatch.com](http://www.durbanwatch.com/)), also to be held on Thursday in Manhattan, on “The Perils of Global Intolerance: The United Nations and Durban III,” told the Post, “New Zealand has done exactly the right thing by pulling out of Durban III and refusing to legitimize what is clearly a campaign by extremists inside the UN to undermine Israel, democracy and the genuine protection of human rights.”

Bayefsky continued, “It is time for other democracies – Hungary, Greece, Spain – that are serious about human rights and object to anti-Semitism and the ages-old demonization of the Jewish people, to get off the fence.

Join the leaders of the Free World like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and so many more – and say no to Durban III. No more should it be acceptable for anti-Semitism to be espoused and championed in the corridors of power, let alone at the United Nations which was built on the ashes of the Jewish people.”