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UK Explanation of Vote on the draft resolution "From rhetoric to reality: a global call for concrete action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". Delivered by the UK's Permanent Representative to the WTO and UN, Kumar Iyer.

Thank you, Mr President.

It is appalling that, in 2026, we are still grappling with the scourge of racism, a blight on all our societies.

Racism is not an abstract phenomenon. These are not just words. Growing up, my own childhood was marked by verbal abuse, physical violence and a hatred driven solely by the colour of my skin. This is a world I have long left behind but a world, indeed often worse, in which millions still live.

As such, we, the UK, thank the African Group for bringing forward this resolution and pay particular tribute to South Africa for their principled leadership in keeping the fight against racism high on the international agenda.

We are committed to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all their forms.

The UK fully acknowledges the devastating tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade, and recognises that its legacy continues to shape lives, communities and societies around the world today.

The UK believes that only by acknowledging and discussing collectively the most painful elements of the history that we share with other nations, including the transatlantic slave trade, can we come together in a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect to respond to the challenges that we all face today.

The UK remains committed to that goal.

However, the United Kingdom has longstanding legal concerns regarding several provisions in this resolution relating to reparations, as we have stated before in this Council and at the General Assembly.

They rest on the principles of intertemporality and non-retroactivity, which are essential to legal certainty and the rule of law.

Those principles are of general applicability in various fields of international law and have been used to determine questions of sovereignty, border disputes, the interpretation of treaty obligations and court jurisdiction.

Undermining these principles in one place has far-reaching consequences in many others.

We were also unable to join consensus on the resolution adopted at UNGA on the 25th March referenced in this resolution and refer to the position we set out when the resolution was adopted.

Lastly, the historic concerns over antisemitism surrounding the Durban Conference also remain. We want to put on record that whilst we support the text of the DDPA, we condemn the antisemitic comments made by some at the time.

For these reasons, the United Kingdom will call a vote on the resolution and abstain.

But let me be clear: we remain committed to the vast areas of common ground on this agenda. We are grateful to the Africa Group for keeping the agenda alive and we look forward to continued partnership and dialogue on this important topic.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-63-uk-explanation-of-vote-on-the-draft-resolution-on-rhetoric-to-reality>