



## **BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY**

### **Understanding the Worth and Dignity of Every Human Being as the Key to Brotherhood and Unity**

Statement to the

#### **56th Commission on Human Rights**

#### **Item 6: Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination**

March 24, 2000, United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr Chairman, on behalf of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, we would like to acknowledge the work that the United Nations has done and continues to do to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination, and we would also like to encourage and support the endeavours of the International Agencies, NGOs and civil society.

Before looking for solutions to these problems that affect us all in some way, we need to understand their causes. Our actions and reactions are a result of our experiences, conditioning, socialisation, our values and our thoughts. These are the main factors that determine our inter-actions with our fellow citizens and with the rest of the world.

Our lives often revolve within narrow limits, distinctions and desires. The minds of men and women have been socialised and conditioned to view others according to their outward appearance, culture and language. The world is now divided on the basis of race, creed, nation, sex, age and social status. We see the world not as it actually is, but from our own limited and subjective perceptions.

Because of such divisions there is conflict in us and around us as we seek to defend the territory thus established – whether it be a role, a job, a position in society, the family name or the nation. ‘May no one encroach upon my territory’ is an unspoken sign planted in the hearts of many. This insecurity caused by such limited awareness manifests itself in the form of negativity of one type or another such as anger, greed, ego, violence, lack of self-respect – these are the ingredients of racism and discrimination.

Taking off the glasses through which we have learnt to see and judge the world, calls for some effort and requires a new understanding. But the very act of taking such a step opens up a whole new perspective, a new way of relating to the world around us, and collectively opens up the possibility of creating the foundations for a culture of peace.

In spite of our different racial characteristics, our blood is made of the same components and we all have the same sweat and the same tears. In many traditions the body is seen as a vehicle, a house or a temple for the soul. A distinction is made between the physical, perishable matter of the body, and the non-physical, eternal nature of the inner being, the soul. It is the soul, not the body that holds our values, hopes and aspirations.

If asked about the main qualities present in harmonious relationships, one could immediately reply; tolerance, honesty, respect, understanding, love, patience and empathy. We believe that every human has at the very heart of his or her being these positive qualities and that the extent to which we are in touch with these determines how we feel about ourselves and others and how we perceive the world. It is these common human values that give rise to the universal rights of our cherished Declaration.

Mr Chairman, to conclude, these values do not always translate easily into action. Although they are indeed the basis of our ideals, more often than not they are not put into practice. It is the awareness of our common spirituality that can empower us to transcend the barriers that divide us. Let us focus on what we have in common whilst appreciating our diversity and the benefits that this rich diversity offers. To reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of every human being we need to recognise the values that we all possess, and then express them in our personal, professional and societal relationships. These values need to be central to economic development, no matter where it takes place, and they must be embodied in all of our educational institutions. The Brahma Kumaris is currently working with other organizations world-wide in a project called Living Values: an Educational Programme. We strongly believe that genuine progress can only be made when we have a values system that embraces equality, diversity and equity at every level of society. Only then can we act responsibly towards one another in the true spirit of brotherhood.

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## **Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University**

The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in consultative status with UNICEF.  
The University was founded in India in 1937 and has branches in over 100 countries worldwide.  
It has been affiliated to the United Nations Department of Public Information since 1980.

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