UN MUST ACT NOW TO STOP ANTISEMITISM AT WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM.

Durban, South Africa (September 2, 2001) – Only the most urgent action by the Secretary General of the United Nations can prevent its World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa from becoming a world forum to promote antisemitism.

Kofi Annan and the Secretary General of the Conference, Mary Robinson must prevent the promotion and distribution of evil antisemitic literature and hate speech, and uphold the conventions and articles of the UN if the Jewish people are to be protected by the world body.

Richard D. Heideman, International President of B’nai B’rith, the highest ranking Jewish organizational leader at the Conference said today, “Not since the streets of Germany echoed with antisemitic curses in the years before the Second World War has the Jewish people seen such a concerted assault of antisemitism, as at this Conference supposedly dedicated to end racism and vilification.

“For Kofi Annan and Mary Robinson to continue to allow, as they did in the recently concluded NGO [non-governmental organization] Forum, the Palestinian and Arabic delegations to harass, vilify, threaten and incite hatred against the Jews at this conference, negates the mission of the United Nations. This moment can be seen only as a present danger to global tolerance, human rights and the dignity of the Jewish people. If this declaration is accepted by the Governmental Forum, it will encourage the growth of worldwide antisemitism and will become a turning point in how the international community operates from this point onwards,” Heideman warned.

“From all the international preparatory conferences which put together this World Conference, we knew that Israel would be the subject of international assault. We knew that the Holocaust and many other horrors specific to the Jewish people would be denied and that this very denial would be used as a weapon in the furtherance of the political and diplomatic aims of the Palestinian Arabs and Arab-Islamic countries. But not for one moment did we believe that antisemitism would be condoned by the United Nations within its own forum,” said Heideman.

“If the UN officials and member states do not stand up and defend the organization’s own charter and declarations designed to protect minorities from hate and vilification, then the moral authority of the United Nations itself must be called into question.”

B’nai B’rith International, a official United Nations non-governmental organization (NGO) for decades, has members in 58 countries, including the United States, Israel and South Africa. It is the world’s best-known Jewish human rights, community service, and humanitarian organization.

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