



Statement of
Mary Robinson,
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and
Secretary-General of the World Conference
against Racism, Racial Discrimination,
Xenophobia and Related Intolerance:

Listening is a form of empowerment. Listening to the testimony of those who have suffered racism and discrimination is vital to our understanding of these scourges and to the search for more effective ways to combat them. It is one thing to be aware of how widespread racism is, quite another to place ourselves in the position of those who suffer abuse and discrimination on a daily basis.

I am pleased that space has been found at this Conference to hear the personal stories of a wide variety of individuals. I pay tribute to the International Human Rights Law Group, the South African Human Rights Commission and all who have helped to arrange this event.

These stories need to be heard. But it is not enough to listen and sympathize. The voices of victims are calls to action – to greater effort on behalf of those on the receiving end of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. That is the only way we can prove that we are serious about shaping a world where such abuses of human rights are eliminated.