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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Statement by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Monday, March 21, 2011

THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to call the attention of the Senate to the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed every year on March 21 to commemorate that day in 1960, when in Sharpeville, South Africa, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid “pass laws.” Proclaiming this day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

On this special day, honourable senators, I would like to point out that the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reminds us all of our collective responsibility for promoting and protecting the ideals that are encrypted in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, those of tolerance, human rights, equality, diversity and justice.

Despite having formal laws in place to promote tolerance and diversity in Canada, as well as an increasing diversity in our country, incidents of racism and intolerance continue to occur.

Whether it be lower integration levels, systemic rates of racial profiling or higher unemployment rates, visible minorities encounter discrimination on a daily basis.

[*Translation*]

In my home province of Alberta, awareness and educational initiatives are taking place throughout the week to commemorate and promote this special day. For instance, the Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society is organizing a day of reflection under the theme of “Racism in Canada: Fact or fiction,” during which documentaries, testimonials and presentations will be available to the community.

This year’s International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is dedicated to combating discrimination against people of African descent, which fits perfectly with the United Nations General Assembly decision to proclaim 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent.

[*English*]

To mark 2011’s International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, stated:

The discrimination faced by people of African descent is pernicious. Often, they are trapped in poverty in large part because of bigotry, only to see poverty used as a pretext for further exclusion. Often, they lack access to education because of prejudice —

The Hon. the Speaker: Order. The honourable senator’s time has expired.
