

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

Overview of Week 4 (02 – 06 October 2023)

During the **fourth week** of the 54th session, the UN Human Rights Council will continue the consideration of **the adoption of the Universal Periodic Review's outcomes of Romania, Mali, Montenegro, Bahamas, Burundi, Luxembourg, Barbados, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Liechtenstein, and Serbia**. The Council will hold **General Debates under Agenda items 6¹, 7,² and 8³**. In addition, the Council will discuss **Agenda item 9⁴**.



Universal Periodic Review



Agenda Item 9: Presentation of Reports and Interactive Dialogues



5 October: Interactive dialogue with the **Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**. Economic empowerment of people of African descent.

[A/HRC/54/67](#): The report concluded that **racial inequality and racial discrimination in multiple and diverse forms fuel poverty, economic inequality, and violations of the inalienable human rights of people of African descent across the globe**. The Working Group noted that the land, labor, intellectual property, innovation, and reproductive rights of people of African descent have been consistently commodified as sites of exploitation since the trade and trafficking of enslaved Africans. The persistent expectation of the availability and disposability of Black bodies is a particularly potent colonial legacy. The high rate of inequality experienced by people of African descent is rooted in colonial dispossession and racial exploitation, and still runs primarily along the racial divide. The **Working Group made several recommendations to address these concerns, key among these is the provision of appropriate resources for the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**, a call for a second decade for people of African descent, and commitment to the finalization of the declaration on the rights of people of African descent. Member States should act responsibly in the best interests of people of African descent and UN entities should adhere to those tenets in their internal and external policies and practices. Member States, religious organizations, the UN, and others should put in place positive measures to foster and sustain Black enterprise.

[A/HRC/54/67/Add.1](#)

[A/HRC/54/67/Add.2⁵](#): **Visit to Australia from 12 to 20 December 2022**. The report contained an overview of the current legal, institutional, and policy framework and measures taken to prevent racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance faced by people of African descent in Australia. It also underscored **positive developments as well as gaps in implementation**. Pervasive and serious experiences of racial discrimination, harassment, and exclusion persist for people of African descent across every demographic, social, and economic category and in public and private spaces. The Working Group made concrete **recommendations, measures, and approaches to assist Australia** in its efforts to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. In particular, People of African descent should be included in all decisions that structure their lives, as decision-makers in order for a representative democracy to be fit for purpose. Australia should remove barriers in access and equity in education, housing, employment, and elsewhere.

¹ Universal Periodic Review.

² Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

³ Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

⁴ Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

⁵ As of 30 September, only the English Advanced Version is available.

[A/HRC/54/71](#): The report included conclusions and recommendations on how to **address more efficiently the human rights concerns of people of African descent**. The Working Group highlighted the initiatives it has taken under its mandate, in particular the thematic analyses and dedicated country visits, and emphasized the need for commitments and resources from Member States to enable the Working Group to continue its critical work. The Working Group has provided a platform for civil society, grass-roots organizations and academics to discuss the ways in which the struggle for justice, recognition and reparations is manifested across disciplines, regions, and generations. The Working Group observed a reduction in and retrenchment of racial equality and justice for people of African descent in some countries, often masked by investments in communications strategies rather than in communities. **The visibility, prioritization, and funding of key human rights initiatives leverage the legitimacy of data-driven, evidence-based norms**. The Working Group called upon Member States to confront the role of racial bias and systemic racism in the disproportionate surveillance, stop-and-search, and harassment of people of African descent across regions and in the overrepresentation of people of African descent under social control, whether incarceration, probation, or other situations. Finally, the Working Group recommended that States and other duty bearers implement the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and the program of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent**, and took action to address the root causes and current manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance, including environmental racism, with the active participation and meaningful inclusion of people of African descent with key expertise in leadership roles at all levels.

5 October: Enhanced interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner and the **International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement**. Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers through transformative change for racial justice and equality.

[A/HRC/54/66](#): The report provided an overview of broader developments and actions taken by States and others. The High Commissioner noted **measures** by some authorities at different levels to enhance participation in the context of actions to promote racial justice and equality while highlighting the immense challenges and barriers faced by people of African descent with regard to meaningful, inclusive, and safe participation. Achieving racial justice and equality requires people of African descent and their communities and organizations to be able to influence laws, policies, practices, and processes that shape efforts to fulfill and respect their rights. Alongside data disaggregated by race or ethnic origin, this is critical to ensure that policymaking, implementation, and evaluation of measures put their needs and experiences at the centre and integrate the solutions that they identify. The meaningful, inclusive, and safe participation of People of African Descent is inextricably linked to and hindered by multiple, intersectional, and interconnected experiences of **systemic racism, alongside long-standing marginalization and exclusion, rooted in legacies of enslavement and colonialism**. Furthermore, the lack of a safe and enabling environment has a chilling effect on achieving participation. The High Commissioner called on States to show stronger political will, by taking concrete and special measures to implement effectively all components of the right to participate in public affairs for people of African descent. States must take firm and prompt action towards **accountability and redress** in all cases and guarantee non-repetition. This includes strengthening independent oversight mechanisms and examining the role that racial discrimination, stereotypes, and biases may play in law enforcement and accountability processes.

[A/HRC/54/69](#): The report focused on reimagining policing, and exploring ways to close trust deficits, strengthen institutional oversight, adopt alternative and complementary methods to policing and the use of force and encourage stocktaking of lessons learned, and proposes a series of recommendations in this regard. While recognizing and promoting the importance of sound legal regimes on the use of force, as well as that of adequate training and diversity of law enforcement officers, the Mechanism considered that the most critical and effective drive for change will come through a change of the unwritten, tacit rules governing the culture of policing. Truth, justice and reparation are essential conditions to change culture and attitudes. Addressing the past should go hand in hand with measures aiming to prevent violations and foster an internal culture of accountability through monitoring, reporting violations, training and proper recruitment process.

Robust accountability measures are essential to deliver justice to victims and their families, to prevent repetition, to foster an internal culture of accountability and to restore trust in institutions.

6 October: Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's oral update on drivers' root causes and human rights impacts of **religious hatred** constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Focusing on countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.

6 October: Interactive Dialogue on the report of the **Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**.

[A/HRC/54/68](#): The report contained a summary of the deliberations of the Permanent Forum during its first and second sessions and its conclusions and recommendations. The Permanent Forum attached great importance to the **drafting of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent that complements, develops and fills in the gaps in the existing human rights instruments in relation to people of African descent**. It affirms that the declaration will be a vital tool to guarantee dignity, inclusion, equity and reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent. The Permanent Forum reaffirmed its **critical role in engaging civil society**. The declaration should consider the voices and perspectives of women, young people, older persons, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

The second International Decade for People of African Descent focused on **reparatory justice, recognition and equity and addressed systemic and structural racial discrimination at the local, national, regional and global levels**.

6 October: Presentation of Reports of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. [Followed by General Debate].

A/HRC/54/65⁶: The report provided a summary of the proceedings of the **thirteenth session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards** and the substantive discussions that took place during the session. As conclusion, the Ad Hoc Committee considered the Chairperson's draft document on scope, structure, terms and elements of the "draft additional protocol to the Convention criminalizing acts of a racist and xenophobic nature" prepared pursuant to paragraph 10 of A/HRC/RES/51/32 and took note of preliminary inputs and advice provided by legal experts during the session. In the further fulfillment of its mandate, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that, in accordance with its mandate, a **group of legal experts** representing different regions and legal systems be engaged and tasked to continue to provide the Chair-Rapporteur with precise guidance and input. **The relationship between and the role of criminal and civil law in the context of fighting acts of a racist and xenophobic nature, including with regard to prevention, early warning, urgent and early actions, education, mediation, reconciliation, and rehabilitation.**

General Debate

3-4 October: General Debate under Agenda Item 6.

4 October: General Debate under Agenda Item 7.

4-5 October: General Debate under Agenda Item 8.

6 October: General Debate under Agenda Item 9.

The Geneva Centre's summaries of selected meetings are available [here](#).

⁶ As of 30 September, only the English Advanced Version is available.