

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 57th SESSION

Interactive dialogue on the report of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

03 October 2024

Ms. June Soomer, Chairperson of The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, presenting the annual report shared with Council concerns of the Permanent Forum, including the new waves of racism on social media, racist hate speech from politicians, and a disturbing use of racially biased Artificial Intelligence systems in the dispensation of justice, among others. To fight against systemic racism, she stressed the importance of an unequivocal and pro-active anti-racist approach. Therefore, she called for the **proclamation of a second International Decade for people of African descent, with a decolonial approach**. This next International Decade must tackle systemic and structural racism within and among countries, pursue reparatory justice, and address emerging and urgent challenges such as environmental justice and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence- as highlighted by the UN Secretary-General in his latest report on the International Decade for People of African Descent.

In the report, the Permanent Forum stressed various key recommendations, focusing on **education and culture**. The Permanent Forum views education as the cornerstone for building just, non-discriminatory, and inclusive societies. To truly serve this purpose, education must be anti-racist, civic, inclusive, and with curricula that accurately reflect the histories, cultures, contributions, and agency of people of African descent. There are several government and grass-roots initiatives aimed at promoting anti-racist education – such as the enactment of equal treatment and non-discrimination laws, the implementation of affirmative action measures, the creation of community educational programs to preserve ancestral practices and languages, and the development of educational programs for women and girls. This is because, there is an extensive, diverse, and rich cultural heritage of communities of African descent. Member States must take decisive steps to protect and preserve African and people of African descent spiritual and traditional practices, as well as ancestral lands, territories, and monuments. They need to take comprehensive measures to address socioeconomic inequities faced by people of African descent in their countries.

As an anti-racism human rights mechanism, she stressed the need to address the past in order to secure future conditions of life that uphold the dignity and rights of all. Reparatory justice plays an integral role in addressing histories and legacies for the accomplishment of sustainable development for Africans and people of African descent, and it should also be included in the United Nations declaration on the human rights of people of African descent, and the second International Decade for People of African Descent.

She concluded by mentioning the situation in Haiti, focusing on the impact that the legacy of colonization and the institution of enslavement have had in the country.

Interactive dialogue

32 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. **The majority of the countries** reaffirmed strong commitment to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance given that racial discrimination not only inflicts profound harm on individual victims but also undermines peaceful and democratic societies. **Cuba** reiterated a full rejection of racism and racial discrimination in all the manifestations. States must eradicate the systemic causes that lead to poverty, brutality, inequalities, and the lack of opportunities for people of African descent. **Countries** also underlined the importance of reconciliation and reckoning with the

past, that an essential part of any reconciliation process is to listen to those who have been affected, and that the Permanent Forum can play a role in this regard. Addressing the deep-rooted inequalities through reparative justice, was for **Sierra Leone** a critical step towards achieving true equality and reconciliation. Reparative justice goes beyond recognition. It involves concrete action to address historic injustices and ongoing discrimination.

The EU, Gambia and the Group of African States shared concerned issues, including investing in education, alleviating poverty and empowering women as well as ensuring equal access to employment, justice, healthcare, and housing, overcoming the digital divide, and protecting cultural heritage. Additionally, **the Russian Federation, Zimbabwe, and Paraguay** highlighted the importance of education as a key pillar for combating racism. Education should not just be accessible to all, but it should reflect our identities and our histories, and it should be geared towards building a truly equal society. **Egypt** also expressed its deepest concern over the continued phenomena of racial discrimination and hatred on grounds of religion, ethnicity, color, or otherwise in addition to the rise of systematic racism against persons of African descent, Arabs, and Muslims along with migrants and asylum seekers while racial policies and practices persist in contradiction with the values of democracy and equality and against international law.

In line with the Permanent Forum's report, at the national level, the **Jamaican government** continued to work on the elaboration of a national policy and roadmap for reparatory justice. As a small island developing state, it continues to grapple with some of these systemic and structural vulnerabilities including the high degree of openness of our economies. Likewise, the **US** affirmed its new federal actions to better preserve African American history.

The **UNFPA informed about** research in the Americas shows that they are more likely to die during childbirth than almost every other racial or ethnic group. They are also more likely to experience gender-based violence. Despite efforts to address historical injustice faced by people of African descent, racism prevails everywhere. **UNESCO** will continue to support the Permanent Forum through its programs and initiatives against racism and discrimination.

NGOs considered addressing inequalities as a critical opportunity to tackle and mitigate the systemic disparities that affect people of African descent worldwide. Economic empowerment of these communities is vital not only for combating poverty but also for ensuring equitable participation and economic and social development. They noted that racial discrimination is not only present among students but also in educational institutions. **Amnesty International** urged all states to recognize the rights of people of African descent to reparatory justice for these historical harms and for states that engaged in and profited from enslavement and colonialism to make appropriate reparations.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (32 country delegations):

European Union, Gambia (on behalf of Group of African States), Trinidad and Tobago (on behalf of the CARICOM Group), Sierra Leone, Jamaica, United States of America, Brazil, Panama, Algeria, Egypt, Paraguay, Cuba, Ghana, Russian Federation, Zimbabwe, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Senegal, Ethiopia, China, Guatemala, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Namibia, Colombia, South Africa, Honduras, Kenya.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (3):

Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Amnesty International.

International organization: UNESCO, UNFPA.

To watch the full meeting refer to the [UN WEB TV](#).