



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

#HRC58 • 27 March 2025



BACKGROUND AND THEME

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/161, the Human Rights Council will hold a meeting in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

OPENING STATEMENT

H.E. Mr. Volker TÜRK, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Sixty years ago, the world was undergoing profound change. Across the globe, there was growing awareness of the pervasive impact of racism. South Africa remained firmly entrenched in apartheid. But at the same time, on the African continent and beyond, states were emerging from the shadow of colonisation and people were demanding **equality, rights, and recognition**. In several countries, powerful civil rights movements led the push for racial justice and for international measures against racial discrimination.

In this period of mobilisation, hope, energy, and promise, the international community came together to examine one of the most fundamental questions of the time, how to ensure the equality and dignity of all people, no matter their race, colour, descent, or origin. The result, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (**ICERD**), was a



milestone. It was the first human rights treaty to be adopted after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, ICERD is one of the most widely ratified human rights treaties in the world, with **182 State Parties**.

Now, 60 years after the adoption of ICERD, we remember how far we have come and how hard we have fought for equality, for racial justice, and an end to discrimination. We recall the **historic end of apartheid in South Africa**. We welcome the adoption of legal frameworks to combat racial discrimination. We acknowledge the development and implementation of national action plans against racism in numerous countries. We also call for more action, solidarity, equality, and racial justice. Despite the significant progress that has been made, the **ICERD's promise remains unfulfilled for many**. We can never take for granted what we have achieved. We cannot be complacent. Racism and white supremacy continue to poison our communities, politics, media, and online platforms.

A **wave of dehumanising narratives** is both feeding on and fuelling fear and division. This toxic rhetoric is amplified by social media so that it echoes throughout the online world and seeps into our offline lives. People of African descent, migrants and asylum seekers, Roma, Indigenous peoples, and others are denied their rights and treated as subhumans simply because of their colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Marginalised racial and ethnic groups continue to be targeted, excluded, and scapegoated all over the world. **Structural institutional racism** shackles them to the past and prevents them from thriving in the present or moving into the future. There is a frightening proliferation of racist violence and hate crimes.

Recent studies in **Europe** have highlighted a worsening trend of racism against people of African descent, as well as ongoing pervasive discrimination against Roma. The poverty rate for Indigenous peoples exceeds 40% in multiple countries in **Latin America**, where structural discrimination holds them back. Excessive use of force and deaths of people of African descent at the hands of law enforcement officials continues in many countries, including Brazil. In the **United States**, between 2013 and 2023, unarmed black people were almost four times more likely to be killed by police than white people. Women belonging to marginalised racial and ethnic groups continue to face intersecting forms of discrimination that deepen their exclusion and isolation. OHCHR notes **stark disparities** in access to education, work, health, and law, participation in public life, and decision-making. For example, in some **European countries**, black women are four times as likely and Asian women twice as likely to die in childbirth than white women.

Racism attacks the very foundations of our societies, weakening and dividing us and damaging everyone, everywhere. And the solution is clear. Strong leadership is needed to overcome centuries of discrimination. Societies need to address the terrible legacies of enslavement and colonialism, which means identifying the truth, defining the harm, and pursuing reparations in its various forms. States must adopt and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and policies, establish and strengthen national human rights institutions and equality bodies, and ensure the meaningful, inclusive, and safe participation of racial and ethnic groups in decision-making.

We cannot accept any rollback of hard-won gains. We cannot allow the silencing of voices highlighting systemic racism. We cannot permit the erasure of the history of enslavement and



colonisation or the denial of the profound trauma and intergenerational suffering it has caused. The absurd, senseless hatred and **simple callousness of racism** have been brilliantly exposed and critiqued by artists and writers around the world. The Indian writer Arundhati Roy, for example, has pointed out that racism is a failure of the imagination, demonstrating an inability to see the world in terms other than those set out for you. Poetry also captures the resilience and determination of the victims of racism. For instance, the legend **Maya Angelou**, who wrote ‘But still, like air, I’ll rise’, and South Africa’s National Poet Laureate **Mongane Wally Serote** who said ‘There will be a better time’.

Today, as we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and as we mark 60 years of ICERD, we listen to these voices that describe something so terrible with such eloquence. We condemn racism in all its forms and we support its victims everywhere and in every interaction. We resolve to stand up for justice and equality, always; to dismantle entrenched power structures and confront white supremacy; to work with affected communities; and to challenge the biases in our societies. **Racism has been a destructive part of our world for centuries.** It is a deeply ingrained practise that is learned and then lived and passed from one generation to the next. We must break this vicious cycle and live up to the ICERD’s promise. We must build a world in which racial discrimination is a thing of the past.

STATEMENTS BY PANELLISTS

Mr. Michal BALCERZAK, Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD Committee)

Today’s commemoration of the 60th anniversary of ICERD comes at a crucial moment. The world is facing turbulent times and challenges undermining the realisation of human rights and racial equity. Over the past six decades, ICERD has been instrumental in the global fight against racial discrimination. It has provided a robust legal framework requiring states to take concrete measures to prohibit racial discrimination in all its forms. The Convention has **spurred legislative reforms, strengthened national institutions**, and promoted policies aimed at fostering equality. It has also facilitated dialogue between governments, civil society, and international bodies to enhance protections for marginalised racial and ethnic communities. In the last 60 years, the CERD Committee, established by ICERD as the first treaty body in the UN system, has seen progress in the fight against racial discrimination.

However, progress has not occurred at the pace and to the extent needed and expected by marginalised groups and victims of racial discrimination. **Racial discrimination remains deeply embedded in many societies**, affecting access to justice, education, healthcare, employment, and political participation. The rise of xenophobic rhetoric, racial hate speech, and digital discrimination, including algorithmic bias, continues to undermine the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The CERD Committee has also observed an **alarming rollback** on previously heartwarming gains, with increasing attacks on human rights defenders, journalists, and activists advocating for racial justice.

During his last global update to the UNHRC, the High Commissioner warned that we cannot allow the fundamental global consensus around international norms and institutions, built painstakingly over decades, to crumble before our eyes. His concern also applies to the



obligations and institutional framework created to eliminate racial discrimination. To counter this trend, we need to renew our commitment to fully respect and effectively implement obligations under international human rights law, including ICERD.

Prompt action is needed to end current conflicts and impunity, address the root causes of racial discrimination, and prevent further human rights violations targeting people on the basis of their national ethnic origin and identity. The CERD Committee calls on states to strengthen the treaty body system that they themselves established to monitor compliance with human rights law. This includes allocating adequate resources and political support to ensure the effectiveness of the oversight mechanisms.

Furthermore, it is imperative that states take proactive measures to prevent the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority, combat the **political instrumentalization of racism and xenophobia**, and effectively address the proliferation of racist hate speech and xenophobic discourse both online and offline. In commemoration of the International Day Against Racial Discrimination, we recall the victims of the Sharpeville massacre, who have valiantly protested against apartheid. Today, members of marginalised groups, human rights defenders, and students continue to protest and speak up against racial discrimination, segregation, apartheid, genocide, and other crimes.

In response, in many countries they face murder, police violence, arbitrary detention, deportation, and other forms of retaliation. Attacks on media and journalists that denounce racial discrimination are also on the rise, while social media algorithms shadow banned some anti-racism content. **Structural and systemic racism** continues to manifest in socio-economic disparities disproportionately affecting people of African descent, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalised racial and ethnic groups.

The **lingering effects of slavery and colonialism** exacerbate these inequalities. While the Convention provides for special measures to address these disparities, the increasing resistance to such measures in many countries is deeply concerning. The CERD Committee calls on states and judicial bodies to safeguard the use of special measures as effective tools for dismantling structural and systemic racism. Initiatives for **reparatory justice** have progressed at local, national, regional, and international levels. The Committee is currently working on a general recommendation on reparations for the injustices from the transatlantic traumas of enslaved Africans, their treatment as chattel, and the ongoing harms to and crimes against people of African descent. A call for input has been issued, and a half-a-day of general discussion will be held on 25 April during the CERD Committee's 115th session.

Indigenous peoples, people of African descent, and other marginalised groups are also disproportionately affected by devastating effects of climate change and racially discriminatory impact of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. Initiatives addressing these matters must include a human rights-based approach, grounded on the principle of non-discrimination and of meaningful participation of racially marginalised persons. Similarly, the human rights ecosystem needs the active **involvement of climate and tech experts** to find innovative ways to prevent and adequately address the disparate and adverse impacts of climate change and emerging technologies.



As the UNHRC is aware, **conflicts with ethnic and identity dimensions** are causing immense human suffering, bringing violations to atrocity crimes level and sowing the seeds for further violence. To address these situations, the CERD Committee will continue to use and strengthen the tools at its disposal, including the periodic review and its unique early warning and urgent action procedure. It is also worth recalling that under Article 11 of ICERD, State Parties may bring any matter of concern regarding another State party if it relates to obligations under ICERD. The CERD Committee stands ready to exercise its mandate and ensure that such matters are resolved in accordance with the Convention. Notably, in 2024, the CERD Committee published the final report of the **Ad Hoc Conciliation Commission on the Inter-State Communication of the State of Palestine versus Israel**.

At a time when the very existence of racism is increasingly denied, the CERD Committee calls on individuals, human rights defenders and civil society organisations (CSOs) to persist in their efforts to expose and combat racial injustice. The Committee encourages increased engagement with the work, including the submission of information on State compliance with the Convention. With this conviction, the Committee is commemorating the 60th anniversary of ICERD through a year-long campaign. It invites States, (CSOs) and all stakeholders to contribute to this commemoration through concrete actions to implement the Convention, the organisation of events, awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives. As UN Secretary-General has recently affirmed, **ICERD remains a beacon of hope to guide us in dark times**.

Ms. Angeli ACHREKAR, Deputy Executive Director of the Programme Branch at the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

This commemoration comes in the timely context of the current geopolitical moment that the world is witnessing, characterised by *polycrisis* and polarisation around issues of human rights, inequalities and social injustices. The world is also witnessing a significant shift in the health and development landscape following recent foreign policy changes from the United States. Indeed, the **global HIV response has been severely disrupted** by the pausing of US foreign assistance that were central to delivering HIV services across the globe. It has been devastating to communities of people living with and at risk of HIV.

UNAIDS is leading the world together with Member States and communities to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. The HIV response, however, is at a crossroads. While celebrating the progress towards the SDGs, **inequalities continue and racial disparities still persist that undermine the HIV response**. Particularly when it comes to new HIV infections, AIDS deaths and access to life-saving medications. In our latest global update, UNAIDS outlines these inequalities. For example, although much progress is seen in sub-Saharan Africa, it is still home to over half of the 9.3 million people living with HIV that are in need of life-saving treatment. Among the young people in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly **80% of the new HIV infections are among adolescent girls and young women**. Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly South Africa, still has the highest burden of HIV in the world.

Racial disparities in HIV burden and outcomes are evident in many countries. In the **United States**, black people are nearly eight times more likely than white people to acquire HIV. And black people living with HIV are less likely to have a suppressed viral load than white people with HIV. 61% versus 71%. In **England**, the use of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is 280 times higher



among white men than among black women. Member States have an obligation to ensure equal enjoyment of the right to health without discrimination on grounds of race or ethnicity. The realities of the HIV pandemic underscore the critical role of racism in global health inequalities.

In the HIV response, we must be particularly mindful of **intersecting inequalities driven by race, socioeconomic status, gender, and identity**. Key and marginalised populations, such as women, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people, and sex workers, are stigmatised and sometimes criminalised in countries around the world. This impacts their access to HIV prevention and treatment services, and this impacts the progress we will have across the globe.

It is equally important to also address Indigenous people and their experiences with HIV. The current global AIDS strategy that spans from 2021 to 2026 and the 2021 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, for the first time, have recognised **Indigenous peoples as a priority population** in the HIV response. At the global level, UNAIDS has been working with Indigenous peoples' networks to increase the visibility of their inequalities that Indigenous peoples face, many of which are the same as those that drive the HIV epidemic, namely racism, poverty, discrimination, marginalisation, lack of access to services, and lack of legal recognition. **Indigenous women face additional intersecting inequalities**.

Countering structural and systemic racism is key to ending AIDS as a public health threat. Careful monitoring of HIV programmes is needed to **identify racial and ethnic disparities**, that access to services and outcomes with intervention scaled up to address and eliminate these inequalities. UNAIDS strives to live its values. During the thematic segment of the UNAIDS Programmatic Coordinating Board last June, the diversity of Indigenous peoples and intersections with key populations of HIV, including Two-Spirit and LGBTI communities, were shared. The Board also discussed good practises of work in expanding HIV services and addressing stigma and discrimination, and violence against **Two-Spirit Indigenous youth**.

A recent **UN-wide report on racism** that provides a great set of recommendations of how UN entities can collectively tackle racial discrimination within the UN system, shows a **high magnitude of racism and racial discrimination within the UN system**, with one in every five of the surveyed respondents reported having experienced racial discrimination or harassment of work. The UN system, at all levels, should continue to collectively respond to the report's recommendations, which calls upon us collectively to develop a system-wide mechanism for harmonisation and coherence, including by means of interagency collaboration, develop internal systems to support accountability and transparency, and implement key operational activities, including the development of knowledge and expertise, addressing equality and equity in opportunities for human resource management.

It is urgent to **come together in solidarity** to deliver human rights-based responses that eliminate inequalities based on gender, sexuality, and race, that raise the dignity of all people and meets the demands of social justice, and that is truly capable of ending AIDS and ensuring people living with HIV can live free of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination.



Mr. Bernard MOGESA, Secretary of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR)

The 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD is a **milestone** serving as a reminder of our shared commitment to the promotion of equality and justice for all, regardless of race, colour, descent, or national and ethnic origin. Kenya has made strides towards eliminating racial discrimination, but much work remains to be done. The Secretary of the Kenyan NHRI takes this opportunity to highlight some of the efforts the KNCHR and the Government have made in addressing some of these gaps, and especially in relation to the Indigenous peoples, persons with albinism, refugees, and marginalised communities.

General Comment No. 34 on Racial Discrimination against People of African Descent outlined that racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent are expressed in many forms, notably structural and cultural. In this regard, the KNCHR continues monitoring and investigating violations against Indigenous people in Kenya, particularly forest-dwelling communities. The KNCHR continues conducting high-level, independent fact-finding missions to ember-booted forests, where it investigates the human rights violations committed against the Indigenous community. These violations have unarmed systemic violations on their rights to life, liberty, security of person, culture, religious beliefs and practises, as well as property.

Additionally, the KNCHR continues advocating for the implementation of the African Commission and African Court on Human and People's Rights decisions regarding the **Endorois and Ogiek Indigenous communities** in Kenya. A task force was formed to implement these decisions, and the KNCHR has been issuing advisories to relevant government agencies to that effect. Lack of political goodwill and commitment from the Government has hindered the full implementation of these decisions. The KNCHR has appeared as *amicus curiae* in a petition filed by members of the Ogiek community. It has also been involved in the Red Plus Project, which aims to ensure that forest communities are meaningfully engaged in the conservation and sustainable utilisation of forest resources. The Commission also leads the implementation of Kenya's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which directly impacts the rights of Indigenous communities, particularly their right to land and freedom of expression.

General Comment No. 37 of 2024 on **Equality and Freedom from Racial Discrimination in the Enjoyment of the Rights to Health** highlighted that employment, education, exposure to the physical environment, occupational hazards, housing, chemicals, air and water quality, sanitation and hygiene, climate change and economic, social and development policies have a significant impact on one's health and well-being, as they influence access to resources, opportunities and the quality of life. **Structural determinants** have the largest impact on patterns of health inequalities. Racism, classism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia are among the structural determinants of health.

The KNCHR uses general comments and concluding observations to actively advocate for the protection of the rights of persons with albinism in Kenya, including the right to health. It continues monitoring and investigating reports of **persons with albinism** targeted for dangerous ritual practises and have been working closely with the state and non-state actors to put in place better protection mechanisms to safeguard this vulnerable group.



The Commission (KNCHR) co-led in the development of the **National Action Plan on Albinism** and have been calling for its adoption by the Cabinet. Additionally, it was on the forefront to advocate for Kenya's ratification of the African Visibility Protocol, which specifically protects the rights of persons with albinism. As a result of these efforts, Kenya ratified the Protocol in 2021 and is hopeful that its implementation will significantly improve the situation for persons with albinism in Kenya. In collaboration with organisations representing persons with albinism, the Commission mapped the laws, policies and programmes that address albinism, ensuring that there is greater transparency and accountability in the protection of their rights.

On **refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons**, the Commission is also committed to advancing the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. It is currently implementing the project focused on improving the protection and integration of refugees and host communities in Kenya. In 2019, the Commission launched an enquiry into the human rights situation in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, two of the largest refugee camps in the country, and it shared its findings to the various state and non-state actors. Since the ratification of ICERD, positive outcomes have been realised in Kenya, including the **granting of citizenship** to previously stateless communities such as the Nubian, Makonde and Shona communities. Moreover, Kenya has introduced the Shirika Plan, which aims to promote the **socio-economic inclusion of refugees** by transforming camps into integrated settlements, providing refugees with better access to services and opportunities for self-sufficiency.

Kenya has also embraced **access to justice for marginalised communities** through the institutionalisation of alternative justice models and initiatives, such as the rolling out of the e-filing of cases and establishing high court sub-registries closer to those communities. The first key challenge that has been witnessed is in regards to resourcing of the various institutions charged with the responsibilities and mandates of protecting the rights of the Indigenous communities as well as the refugees, among others. It is for this reason that the Commission calls upon the Government of Kenya to avail resources for that particular purpose. The Commission further suggests the following points for action.

- Strengthening political goodwill. The Government must be committed to implementing the decisions and recommendations of regional and international human rights mechanisms. NHRIs and CSOs shall enhance their advocacy and monitoring the full wrap of the recommendation.
- Enhancing accountability and enforcement. NHRIs and relevant government bodies must improve the enforcement of laws and policies to protect the rights of racially discriminated communities.
- Promoting inclusion and participation. All stakeholders must ensure that marginalised communities, Indigenous peoples and persons with albinism are actively engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies that affect their lives.
- Building capacity. NHRIs and CSOs must be adequately resourced and equipped to carry out their mandate effectively, including the provision of technical assistance and training.

Reaffirming its commitment to ICERD principles, the Commission urges the international community to support NHRIs and CSOs in their efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and to foster an inclusive and just society for all.



Ms. Joan CARLING, Filipino Indigenous Activist and Co-Convenor of the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group (IPMG) for Sustainable Development

Ms. Joan CARLING highlights the crucial role of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination served in advancing Indigenous peoples' rights. For centuries, Indigenous peoples have suffered systemic discrimination, exclusion and human rights violations. They continue to be **denied access to justice, dispossessed of their lands, and marginalised in decision-making processes**. While ICERD was adopted in 1965 without explicitly mentioning Indigenous peoples, the CERD Committee has consistently affirmed that racial discrimination against Indigenous peoples is a serious violation of human rights that requires urgent action.

As we commemorate 60 years of ICERD, we must also look ahead to 2027, which marks two major anniversaries for Indigenous rights. First, it is the 30th anniversary of **CERD's General Recommendation No. 23 on Indigenous Peoples**, adopted in August 1997. While only five paragraphs long, General Recommendation No. 23 was an early affirmation of various foundational rights. These include Indigenous peoples' rights to their territories, to their lands, to restitution; to free, prior and informed consent; and to various cultural rights, which are articulated within the system of fundamental non-discrimination and equality norms. This was an early and very welcome validation of the equality and equal rights of all peoples, as set out in the Charter of the UN, guarantees that have been long denied to Indigenous peoples.

The year 2027 also marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. After many years of discussion, the UN General Assembly adopted this Declaration, recognising the equal rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples, including their right to self-determination. CERD's General Recommendation NO. 23 was often cited in the discussions around the Declaration, and since 2007, the CERD Committee often refers to the Declaration in its concluding observations, general recommendations, urgent actions, and communications and decisions. It has affirmed that the standards in the Declaration are consistent with the human rights guarantees in the Convention.

Even if the ICERD, adopted in 1965, contains **no reference to Indigenous peoples**, the CERD Committee has been clear as it applies to Indigenous peoples, and that the failure to guarantee, respect, and protect their rights is discriminatory. To achieve this, it has adopted detailed recommendations consistently for over 30 years, including under its much appreciated **early warning and urgent action procedure** in several important recent decisions pursuant to Article 14 Complaint Procedure. These recommendations include the need to recognise our collective land rights, the need to prevent forced eviction of Indigenous peoples, challenging racial discrimination in resource extraction, addressing violence against Indigenous defenders, and the need to implement the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples.

Further, CERD's General Recommendation No. 25, issued in 2000, acknowledged the **intersectional discrimination**, both racial and gender-based oppression, experienced by Indigenous women. In 2022, the CERD Committee will build on this, adopting General Recommendation No. 39, which specifically addresses the need to recognise and protect the **interrelated individual and collective rights of Indigenous women** and their collective rights as part of Indigenous peoples. Likewise, the CERD Committee has called for stronger measures



to combat violence, discrimination, and economic exclusion faced by Indigenous women across the globe.

Likewise, the CERD Committee has illuminated the challenges of eradicating racial discrimination and ensuring tangible equality for Indigenous peoples, which remains evident still in many situations. However, Ms. Joan CARLING has no doubt that CERD will continue to raise concern and make recommendations to states to support them to address this problem. Since it was adopted in 1997, the CERD Committee has developed a large body of practise that goes beyond the short but valuable statements in the General Recommendation No. 23, which was also approved prior to the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

Ms. Joan CARLING strongly urges the CERD Committee to take the next step by developing an **updated General Recommendation on Indigenous peoples** to reflect the past 30 years of progress and respond to the current challenges that they face. The updated recommendation shall consider the following. First, integrate the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a key reference. Second, strengthen the legal obligation of states to protect Indigenous peoples' lands and resources, cultures, and self-governance. Third, address the increasing threats of climate change, extractive industries, and land dispossession. Fourth, provide clear guidance on ensuring Indigenous peoples' participation in decision-making, including by Indigenous women. This step will provide a much-needed legal and policy framework for states to uphold their obligations under ICERD and protect Indigenous peoples' rights more effectively. she stands ready to support the CERD Committee in this crucial endeavour.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Warmly welcoming so much support for the idea and spirit of the ICERD from all present stakeholders, **Mr. Michal BALCERZAK** recalls that we do have standards. The ICERD is a living instrument, but there is still room for improvement. Reference was made to standards for Indigenous peoples, which is duly noted. Such a reflection needs to be undertaken. With regard to the DDPA, he assures the UNHRC that the Committee is obviously also guided by DDPA rules, which serve as a compass for the Committee. Despite the existence of standards, they might also be improved. There is an ongoing effort by the Committee on Complementary Standards led by the Ambassador of Djibouti. It is up to States to reinvigorate this debate over standards. He further explains that the Committee faces barriers and struggles with workload and financial difficulties. Despite this, there is a grain of optimism. The Committee has produced very potent General Recommendations (GR). GR 37 on the right to health and other ones are in the pipeline. He warmly encourages all those present to continue this debate, thereby extending two invitations. The Committee will hold a meeting with State parties on 24 April 2025 during its session. The Committee will also hold a meeting with civil society on 9 May 2025. In closing, Mr. Michal BALCERZAK recalls that 60 years ago, it proved possible for states to unite over this issue, even though the world of 1960s was very divided. Now, we should be united in this fight against racial discrimination. It is indeed a common cause.

On actions to undertake, **Ms. Angeli ACHREKAR** explains it is a whole-of-society approach, an approach in which communities of racial and ethnic minorities need to be in the lead and supported to lead. In the HIV response, there are targets on community-led responses, that



programmes and advocacy be led by organisations comprised of people living with and affected by HIV in all their diversity. This is the only way we will end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. It is not enough to consult or have participation. We need to support leadership by communities themselves. Once more, it is with this urgency that we come together in solidarity to deliver human rights-based that eliminates intersecting inequalities based on gender, sexuality, and race that raises the dignity of people and meets the demands of social justice. And that is truly capable of ending AIDS for once and for all.

Mr. Bernard MOGESA praises the comments from the audience which will enrich the work of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR). Using the UN principle of leaving no one behind as a compass, the KNHRC will continue advocating for the rights of the Indigenous and marginalised communities, especially when it comes to access to opportunities at the national and county level in Kenya. Secondly, Mr. Bernard MOGESA makes a call for the international community to support the efforts towards peace in this African region, to reduce the refugee burden to Kenya, which currently hosts more than one million refugees, and this has a huge impact not only on the resource conflicts but also to the environment. The KNCHR has just concluded a mini-enquiry on business and human rights in the country to the extent to which Indigenous and marginalised people are enjoying their rights vis-à-vis the investments. A trend emerged whereby the investors are taking community land without public participation and consent, an issue that the KNCHR will continuously follow, especially those multinationals who do not engage members of the public. These lands belong to the members of the public. There are no titles, no deeds. The KNCHR will continue ensuring that those communities are protected.

Ms. Joan CARLING encourages the international community, especially UN member states, must implement in good will and good faith the recommendations of the ICERD. So many recommendations of the ICERD relating to Indigenous peoples are not implemented due to lack of political will, narrow economic interest, and persistent discriminatory systems, structures, and practises. These systems and practises need to be transformed with a sense of urgency in line with the obligations of states. Furthermore, commitments must be put into action by undertaking necessary political, economic, and social reforms and adopt a policy on zero tolerance for all forms of racism and discrimination. This requires putting in place effective mechanisms for access to justice by victims and ensure accountability of those perpetrating racism and discrimination in all its forms. Finally, international solidarity, unity and cooperation, and concerted actions are needed to combat the rise in power of white male supremacy, which is rolling back global efforts to end racism and all forms of discrimination. The world is expecting the leadership of the UN to live up to its obligation to end racism and discrimination and uphold the rights and dignity of every citizen, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by State Delegations

On behalf of the African Group, **Ghana** states that the 60th anniversary of ICERD should serve as a reminder to the international community about the urgent need to implement provisions of this important instrument and to scale up efforts to address the scourge of racism and racial discrimination in all their manifestations whenever and wherever they occur. As we commemorate this historic milestone, we must remain mindful and loyal to the spirit that led to



its adoption, which is a response to unprecedented incidents of racism and racial discrimination and unfettered violations of human rights in the world and in the inhumane and dehumanising system of apartheid. The African Group condemns any acts of radical dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, and acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin. For the African Group, ICERD remains a platform to measure national progress in relation to combating racial discrimination and redressing racial injustices and prejudices. ICERD, therefore, needs to be strengthened to fill the gaps related to the contemporary manifestation of racism and racial discrimination not contemplated by others. The DPPA remains the only comprehensive instrument addressing these gaps.

On behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (**GCC**), **Kuwait** has the honour to deliver this statement to mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD. The GCC states affirm their unswerving position in combating racism, intolerance, and xenophobia, and their commitment to noble values against this dangerous scourge which are based on a culture of tolerance and equality that underpins the true Islamic religion and all international relevant conventions. In spite of progress made in recent decades, millions of people continue to suffer from discrimination owing to their ethnic origin or nationality. Above all, the Palestinian people who face policies of systematic apartheid and are deprived of their fundamental rights in the complete absence of justice or equality. Migrants and asylum seekers also continue to be victims of discrimination and exploitation, and we continue to witness growing Islamophobia based on hate and exclusion. Therefore, it is crucial to redouble efforts to confront these phenomena which threaten the peace and security of societies. It is also imperative to intensify efforts to bolster human rights. In that context, the GCC countries have taken legislative measures to promote equality, combat racism, and they have adopted national action plans to combat hate and disseminate the tolerance and promote dialogue.

On behalf of the **Nordic-Baltic countries**, **Sweden** stresses that racism and racial discrimination harms individuals and undermines democratic societies by causing conflict and perpetuating systemic inequalities. Additionally, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination deepen experiences of injustice faced by women, girls, LGBTQI persons, and persons in vulnerable situations. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the realisation of universal human rights. ICERD provides a comprehensive and adequate framework for addressing both longstanding and contemporary forms of racism. Reflecting on 60 years since the adoption of the Convention, however, the international community must acknowledge that our aspirations remain unfulfilled. Not due to a lack of norms, but rather a failure to fully respect and implement them. Moving forward, our priority should be to achieve universal adherence to the Convention and, not least, encourage its full and effective implementation. The countries would like to know which are the main barriers today to the full and effective implementation of the Convention, and what could be done together concretely to overcome them.

Taking the floor on behalf of a group of countries, **Brazil** highlights the efforts at COP16 also with a view to the recognition of people of African descent in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Brazil also welcomes the recent initiation of negotiations on an Inter-American Declaration on Persons of African Descent. As a key outcome of the second decade of the UN's Decade on People of African Descent, Brazil highlights the successful adoption of the UN Declaration on the



Human Rights of People of African Descent, bolstering the group's shared commitment to equality, dignity and justice. The group calls on all stakeholders to work together to eradicate them.

Jamaica thanks the panel and joins others in commemorating the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD. The Government of Jamaica remains resolute in its commitment to the implementation of the Convention, as reflected in its national motto 'Out of Many, One People', and as expressed in the Jamaican Constitution, all persons enjoy the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race. During National Heritage Week, annually commemorated in October, primary and secondary schools celebrate all races and ethnicities within Jamaica, promoting diversity and inclusiveness as core values of our society. Muhammad Ali's war, immortalised in some the words of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, that until we permanently discredit and abandon philosophies and regimes which hold one race superior and another inferior, our ambitions of lasting peace will remain unattainable. It is Jamaica's hope that at the next milestone commemoration of this treaty, when people think of race instead of discrimination, we think of the Olympics and records of Usain Bolt.

Guatemala recalls that this important commemoration reminds us of the urgency of eradicating racism in all its manifestations and guarantee more equitable, inclusive societies. To that end, Guatemala, under the leadership of President Bernardo Arévalo, reaffirms its commitment to combating racism, racial discrimination and promoting equal rights for all. The Guatemalan Government prioritises the respect and promotion of the rights of Indigenous peoples, promoting their participation in decision-making fora and consolidating key institutions such as the Presidential Commission Against Discrimination and Racism. Guatemala recognise that structural racism is a historic challenge that requires profound reform. While progress has been made in combating racial discrimination, Guatemala still notes how racism adopts various forms that limit equitable access to opportunities. It is crucial to acknowledge and address these new trends to prevent a repeat of the same injustices of the past. Similarly, the current migratory crisis requires a global response based on dignity and respect for human rights. Guatemala rejects the resurgence in narratives that stigmatise migrants, which increase racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which exacerbates their vulnerability.

As we gather to commemorate the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, **Kenya** invites all to take a moment to reflect on the enduring legacy of colonialism, which left deep scars of exploitation, oppression and systematic inequalities across the world. The fight for freedom, equity and equality has been shaped by generations of resistance against colonial rule and its aftermath. From the anti-colonial movements in Africa and Asia to the struggles for independence in the Caribbean and Latin America, these battles were not merely for sovereignty but for dignity and justice. They remind us that the pursuit of equality is inseparable from the dismantling of structures built on oppression. The recent UNGA resolution 79/161 serves as a stark reminder on the ongoing struggle against these pernicious forms of discrimination. Kenya is deeply concerned by the alarming global rise in the hate speech and racist extremist movements, which continue to target vulnerable populations including migrants, refugees and people of African descent. Kenya stands firm in its commitment to implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), which remains a solid foundation for combating racism and providing preparation for victims. Kenya calls upon all nations to honour the memory



of those who have suffered from miserable injustices and to work tirelessly to prevent their recurrence. Kenya reaffirms its commitment to eliminating all forms of racism and discrimination and call for increased political will, international cooperation and adequate funding to the effective and concrete implementation of the DDPA.

Azerbaijan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the principles of equality, justice and the protection of fundamental human rights. As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD, a cornerstone of global efforts to combat racism and discrimination in all its forms, racial discrimination continues to pose challenges worldwide, threatening peace, social cohesion and fundamental human rights. Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia in several ways remain victims of racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing. Close to 300,000 Azerbaijanis were dispossessed and are now arbitrarily denied redress and prevented from returning to their ancestral homeland - districts, cities, towns and villages throughout Armenia - due to their ethnic identity in stark violation of the principles enshrined in ICERD and other international human rights instruments. Despite repeated calls for justice, the suffering of these individuals has yet to be adequately addressed. Azerbaijan continues to advocate for the recognition of their legitimate rights, including the right to return, restitution and compensation. As a nation built on multiculturalism and peaceful coexistence, Azerbaijan remains committed to fostering a future where discrimination is eradicated and every individual's dignity is respected. On this significant occasion, Azerbaijan urges Armenia and the OHCHR to address the rights of the expelled Azerbaijani population and to ensure that justice is served.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD, **Luxembourg** states that we must recognise that unfortunately racial discrimination remains a reality in our societies. No country is spared from it. This discrimination is amplified by polarising content, hate speech and systematic disinformation on social networks. Digital racism is assumed on unprecedented proportions, exacerbated by the rapidity and anonymity of advanced tools. Aware of these challenges, Luxembourg has stepped up its action against racism. Despite all its efforts, legislative progress, outreach and training, racism persists. According to a study on racism in Luxembourg, racialized people, in particular people of African descent, continue to suffer racism in their everyday lives. The collective responsibility is clear - Fight racism in all its forms. Isolated action is not enough to meet this challenge. So Luxembourg has developed a national action plan for implementation of ICERD. For the first time, the Government has brought together its efforts in a coherent, coordinated framework, supported by clear indicators to monitor and assess progress. The plan seeks to transform these alarming signals into tangible, measurable actions and will be launched this year. Luxembourg strongly reiterates its commitment to working for a world free of racial discrimination.

As we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, **Armenia** underscores that racial prejudice, ethnic profiling and many forms of hate speech against protected groups oftentimes serve as precursors for atrocity crimes and full-scale violence. This is especially dangerous when elevated to the level of state ideology. Sham trials in Azerbaijan against the Armenian prisoners of war and other detainees are deeply rooted in a decades-long dehumanisation, false narratives and blunt hatred toward the interior Armenian nation. In the absence of any protection mechanism or independent oversight, the Armenian prisoners of war and other detainees are being tortured and intimidated. It is a vivid and obscured manifestation



of discrimination. These people are denied fair trial, defence counsel and medical treatment just because they are ethnic Armenians. Days ago Armenians in Azerbaijan concluded the negotiations on a peace agreement. This is a positive development welcomed by many states in anticipation that signing of a peace treaty would bring a lasting peace, stability and prosperity to our region. Instead, Armenia witnesses persistent attempts to prolong the conflict, including by exploiting the suffering of the people.

As we mark the 60th anniversary of ICERD, **Nigeria** reflects on both the progress made and the challenges that persist in the fight against racism and racial discrimination. For Africa, this struggle is neither abstract nor distant. It is a live reality as the scars of colonialism, apartheid and systematic injustice continue to shape our present. The DDPA is not merely words on paper. It represents Africa's collective resolve to confront racial discrimination, reaffirming its unwavering commitment to equality, justice and non-discrimination. Therefore, Nigeria remains steadfast in promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity or nationality. It is unfortunate that even today we continue to witness a growing and troubling resurgence of racism and racial discrimination across the world. As Nelson Mandela wisely reminded us, the journey to freedom and equality is long, but Nigeria remains resolute in its commitment to full implementation of the DDPA. Finally, on this solemn occasion, Nigeria calls on all stakeholders to renew their dedication to combating racial discrimination, ensuring the world does not regress into patterns of exclusion and oppression.

Cameroon stresses that six decades after the adoption of ICERD and more than 20 years after the DDPA, combating racism and racial discrimination remains an unfinished endeavour. Inequalities, systematic inequalities persist, new forms of discrimination emerge, fell into by digital technologies and online hate speech. Cameroon restates that the effective implementation of the ICERD depends on tangible action, tangible commitments. In this regard, Cameroon underlines the importance of national education and awareness-raising strategies, strengthening the legal framework and institutional frameworks involving civil society and national human rights institutions. Thanks to its cultural and ethnic diversity, Cameroon promotes tolerance and inclusion through educational programmes, awareness-raising campaigns and inter-community dialogue. It prevents tensions and strengthens social cohesion. Cameroon also encourages initiatives to improve access to justice for victims of racial discrimination, support a rigorous monitoring carried out by states as part of the DDPA and ICERD. To conclude, Cameroon calls for stepped-up international cooperation and technical assistance to support states' efforts to implement their commitments for equality and racial justice.

Bolivia is deeply committed to the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, and takes measures to address this. Bolivia adopts a decolonising approach, consisting of plural spaces developed in country for thinking and reflection on how to overcome the legacy of slavery and colonialism, particularly where nowadays that hate speech prevails, as well as xenophobia and dehumanising measures against historically marginalised groups. The year 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD, the very first international human rights treaty approved by the UN General Assembly. The international community must restate its commitment to its implementation and set in place memory and reparation measures. It is crucial to pool international efforts to address this scourge and promote tolerance. Racial discrimination,



however, is still latent in our societies. It affects the dignity of people as well as communities belonging to certain minorities, Indigenous peoples, peasants, and people of African descent. Bolivia is particularly concerned at the increase in hate speech against migrants.

Qatar states that the adoption of the ICERD marked a milestone, and 60 years after its adoption, the principles and status contained therein remain the cornerstone of addressing many of the challenges facing the world today, especially with the emergence of new and renewed patterns of racist and discriminatory practises that affect certain groups in society based on their nationality, ethnic origin or religion. Migrants, refugees and minorities are exposed to violations of their rights on a daily basis, including their right to life due to hate speech against them and hostile practises towards them. Based on the firm conviction that racism and racial discrimination constitute a violation of all international and national conventions and norms, the State of Qatar has been keen to promote the values of equality, combat racism and intolerance, and spread the values of tolerance and acceptance of others. It has taken measures that work to establish a safe and pluralistic community environment free from tensions, manifestations of hatred and racial discrimination. People of different races, religions and cultural backgrounds representing more than 80 countries currently live in Qatar. In the context of laying the foundations for world peace, promoting interfaith dialogue and combating discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, the State established the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, which seeks to spread the culture of dialogue and promote a culture of acceptance of others and peaceful coexistence among followers of different religions and civilisations.

Tunisia emphasizes that today's commemoration aims at renewing the collective commitment to combat all forms of racial discrimination and to defend human dignity and human rights, and also to renew the commitment to ICERD and support the implementation of the DDPA. In this regard, we want to reaffirm our commitment to combating all forms of racism, racial discrimination and hatred in accordance with our constitution, and also in line with commitments taken internationally. Tunisia, in fact, was the first country to abolish slavery in 1846, adopting a law to eliminate racial discrimination in 2018. Tunisia also believes that one of the greatest crimes currently is occupation. Tunisia strongly condemns the brutal aggression being waged by the Occupying Power against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. It condemns the colonial racist regime that is perpetrating racism and hate speech perpetrated against the Palestinians.

Lesotho firmly believes that sixty years since the adoption of ICERD, it still remains the bedrock on which international initiatives to counter racial discrimination are built. The DDPA has become another cornerstone in the global architecture addressing racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Lesotho also recognises commendable efforts of the Intergovernmental Working Group and other mechanisms in supporting effective implementation of the DDPA. As far as states are concerned, Lesotho believes that strong political will is a fundamental effort to combat racial discrimination. It further emphasises that legislation prohibiting racial discrimination is a necessary but not sufficient step towards eradicating discrimination. However, action plans that address the root causes and long-standing impacts of racial discrimination, including its lasting influence on the attainment of education, healthcare and employment, are also essential. In closing, Lesotho stresses the importance of consulting and cooperating with affected groups, including people of African descent, when establishing



policies that specifically affect them. It is Lesotho's view that solutions designed to promote racial justice cannot be successful unless the voices of historically disadvantaged groups are integrated throughout the decision-making processes.

Botswana believes that with only five years remaining before 2030, there is an urgent need to pause and to take stock of how far we have gone in our efforts to actualise the full political, economic and social inclusion of all persons into the societies within which they live, as equal citizens without any form of discrimination as envisioned by ICERD. Botswana acknowledges the efforts made by the state in formulating policies and initiatives that have contributed to reducing racial discrimination. However, regardless of these efforts, racism continues to mutate into a systematic form in the context of law enforcement, discriminatory migration and labour policies, amongst others. The situation undermines the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 10.3. There is therefore an urgent need again for greater political commitment to dismantle systemic racism and for the creation of a new, fully inclusive coexistence arrangement for all persons. This denotes inclusion of holistic equality interventions far beyond legislation and more inter-social economic programming ensuring full participation of all relevant stakeholders across the spheres of life.

Welcoming this commemoration, **Cote d'Ivoire** recalls that on 21 March 1916, in Sharpeville, South Africa, the police opened fire, killing 69 people, due to a peaceful demonstration against apartheid. Over the last few years, racial discrimination still harms people of African descent. These people are facing inequalities in all areas of their lives - justice, education, health and reparation due to the inheritance of slavery, colonialism and racial segregation. The President of Cote d'Ivoire thanks the CERD Committee for all the actions taken to put an end to this scourge, particularly through ICERD and the DDPA. Cote d'Ivoire calls on all countries to accede to these instruments. It will prove their commitment in the quest for social peace and public freedom. Cote d'Ivoire urges states to ensure that school manuals and other curricula, etc., faithfully reflect history linked to the tragedies and atrocities of the past, particularly slavery and the slave trade and colonialism.

In honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as well as the 60th anniversary of ICERD, **Canada** reaffirms its commitment to building a more inclusive world, free from injustice and prejudice, where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Canada continues to combat racism and discrimination and advance their implementation of ICERD. For instance, Canada has renewed our anti-racism strategy. This is a whole-of-government approach to address systemic racism. Canada is upholding the rights and principles set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly by addressing injustices and combating race and discrimination against First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Canada welcomes the adoption of the second International Decade for People of African Descent, and it is investing in Black-led programmes, working to advance racial justice and to improve the wellbeing of Black communities. Finally, Canada recently launched an action plan on combating hate, to address hate incidents, hate crimes and violent extremism, giving its communities the resources they need to identify and prevent hate, as well as to increase support to victims and survivors, and create a coordinated approach across the country.



Welcoming this commemoration, **Burkina Faso** voices its serious concern at the increase in the scourge of racial discrimination six decades on from the adoption of ICERD. Burkina Faso regrets that structures designed for colonialism and slavery is actually feeding back into it. When it comes to efforts deployed under ICERD, Burkina Faso has adopted important legislative takes to prevent and clamp down on racial discrimination. It has also set up public structures and institutes. Their aim has been to combat all forms of discrimination, such as its National Human Rights Commission, its National Observatory for Solidarity, and that of Religious Affairs. Finally, Burkina would like this anniversary not just to be a moment of self-respect and global commitment regarding the principles in the Convention, but also to affirm the importance of cooperation and international solidarity in order to combat racial discrimination.

Combating all forms of discrimination remains one of **Portugal's** top priorities, both at national and international levels. Despite its solid legal framework, stereotypes persist and are amplified by social media platforms. Racial discrimination is felt in several areas of social life, from education to housing, from employment to health, from law enforcement to the justice system. Fighting this scourge is urgent for all states and for the international community. Portugal's constitution states that no one can be privileged, benefited, harmed, deprived of any right or exempt from any duty on account of ancestry, ethnicity, or territory of origin. These are solemn obligations which bind our political action. Portugal takes these responsibilities seriously. As we mark the 60th anniversary of ICERD, Portugal is reminded of the work needed to address racial discrimination. Portugal is committed to fostering an inclusive society where all individuals enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

Malawi notes the progress that has been made in eliminating racial discrimination with the implementation of the Decade for People of African Descent. Many challenges remain, as already highlighted during this panel discussion and in various reports in this Council. Racial discrimination continues to thrive through the entrenched legacies of colonialism, enslavement, and the transatlantic slave trade. People of African descent continue to face discrimination in every area of their lives. Comprehensive progress in the elimination of racial discrimination will therefore require much more than mere rhetoric and certainly strong leadership and political will from states and the international community. It is important to strengthen legal frameworks to ensure the full and effective implementation of the DDPA and ICERD. As racism is deeply entrenched, structural, institutional, administrative, and policy reforms are also key in eradicating decade-old practises of racism. On the 60th anniversary of ICERD, Malawi joins the calls for renewed and concerted efforts at national, regional, and international levels to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Iraq stresses the importance of equality in societies through greater outreach when it comes to human rights, given that this is a fundamental freedom, a fundamental principle. Iraqi society constitutes an example itself of tolerance and cooperation and coexistence in spite of the challenges that we've faced in the past. Iraq is committed to respecting its commitments under the international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the DDPA. This is a well-founded commitment to promote equality far from any discrimination, regardless on what basis. Article 4 of the Iraqi constitution reaffirms that commitment. Iraq also adopted in 2005 a Law on Minorities, guaranteeing them religious freedom. To conclude, Iraq recalls the need to redouble efforts to ensure accountability towards those who perpetrate crimes against



minorities. Iraq urges the international community to devise new instruments to combat racism and to take advantage of existing know-how in the field of human rights.

The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** conveys its gratitude to the speakers for their valuable interventions in commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Respect for human rights and the right to live a dignified life free from all forms of racial discrimination is one of the fundamental pillars of the Charter of the United Nations. On the 60th anniversary of ICERD, the international community is renewed in its resolve to combat this inhumane phenomenon, especially in light of the spread of hate speech and incitement to violence and extremism in the world. Since its founding, the UAE has worked to respect and protect human rights, including the elimination of racial discrimination. This has been reflected in its accession to ICERD in 1974 and its issuance of Decree Law No. 34 of 2023 which criminalises acts related to discrimination, hatred and extremism. Believing in the need to support international efforts in this field, the UAE stresses the importance of UN Security Council resolution 2686 of 2023 on tolerance, international peace and security, which recognises that racism and extremism lead to the outbreak and escalation of conflict.

Belgium stresses that sixty years ago, the international community took a firm stand against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Recognising its vital importance, Belgium signed ICERD early on and has worked to enhance its implementation. Various other mechanisms have since been set up, including forums and working groups. For instance, the start of the second International Decade for People of African Descent has been proclaimed last December, which Belgium supported. Unfortunately, the multiplication of mechanisms has not led to an accelerated pace of eliminating racism and racial discrimination in societies. On the contrary, we must remain vigilant and continue to condemn all forms of racism and intolerance, both online and offline, particularly in light of new emerging challenges posed by social media and new technologies. Belgium believes that ICERD remains the central instrument in this fight. Belgium calls on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the text without delay or lift any reservations.

Egypt welcomes the convening of this important meeting on the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD and commends the interventions of speakers on the challenges and opportunities related to strengthening the implementation of the Convention. Despite the progress made over the past decades, manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance, continue to increase alarmingly, particularly towards people of African descent. Egypt notes with great concern that religion is multiplier of racial discrimination, when ethnic origin overlaps with Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination. Egypt reassesses the need to resolutely address racial discrimination in all its forms by analysing it, ensuring accountability, non-punitive reparations, promoting community education, and the values of equality, as well as supporting national institutions confronted with combating racism. Egypt also calls for the strengthening of the international coalition to activate the delegations contained in the convention, as well as the importance of facilitating efforts to compete and facing all forms of racial discrimination. Egypt calls for a full commitment to the implementation of the DDPA and the recommendations of the CERD Committee in order to continue to build more just and equal societies.



South Africa appreciates the valuable insights shared by the panellists on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of ICERD. Since the democratic breakthrough in 1994, South Africa has adopted a comprehensive set of anti-discrimination laws. As a State Party, South Africa promulgated legislation to combat institutionalised racism and to prevent, prohibit, and eradicate all practises of this nature in accordance with Article 3 of the ICERD. South Africa has also outlawed all acts of illegal dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement, as well as acts of violence or incitement against any race or group of persons. It has progressively taken measures to comply with the ICERD to eliminate racism and transform society. In the context of the continued and alarming incidents of racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance, and on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the ICERD, South Africa urges all states to intensify their efforts of fully implementing ICERD and the DDPA.

Views Expressed by Inter-Governmental Organizations and UN Agencies

The **European Union** states that, sixty years ago, the international community made a historic commitment to a future free from racism with the adoption of the ICERD, a landmark treaty that enshrines the right to equality and dignity for all. Yet racism persists in many forms, making the Convention as vital today as it was in 1965. On this 60th anniversary, the EU calls for renewed action to ensure that the Convention is fully and effectively upheld worldwide. Despite progress, racism continues to be an obstacle to justice, equality, and full participation in society. The persistence of discrimination demands political will, stronger enforcement of existing legislation, and a collective commitment to lasting change. Through the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025, the EU has strengthened national strategies in its Member States, increased funding for anti-racism initiatives, and improved data collection to support more informed policymaking. The European Commission will present its first anti-racism strategy by the end of the year to build on these efforts and accelerate progress. The EU remains steadfast in its commitment to combat racism in all its forms and to address its structural dimension, both within our Union and across the world.

According to **UN Women** and UNFPA, racism remains deeply embedded and pervasive, and this despite commendable progress in global movements and institutional reforms for racial justice. Its intersectional impacts significantly hinder gender equality, human rights and sustainable development, exacerbating the inequalities faced by women, children and marginalised communities. Globally, there is a worrying rise in misinformation, racially motivated hate speech, racial biases in AI systems, disparities in healthcare access and resistance to diversity and inclusion. These factors fuel systematic discrimination while institutional barriers limit access to justice and essential services. Women and girls of ethnic and racial minorities are often denied their right to health and bodily autonomy due to the compounded impact of racism and sexism. This commemoration is the perfect occasion to reaffirm an unwavering commitment to building a world free from racism, discrimination and injustice. UN Women and UNFPA call on states, civil society, the private sector and individuals to take concrete steps to dismantle systemic racism and advance racial justice. This includes enacting and enforcing anti-discrimination laws, promoting inclusive policies, ensuring equitable economic opportunities and addressing the root causes of racial and gender-based violence. UN Women and UNFPA stand ready to support Member States and other stakeholders in their efforts to achieve racial justice and equality.



UNFPA remains deeply concerned about the persistent racial discrimination that limits access to education, employment, and healthcare services for ethnic and racial minorities. Women and girls of ethnic and racial minorities face compounded discrimination with racism and sexism limiting their enjoyment of the right to health, including sexual and reproductive health and bodily autonomy. In the Americas and beyond where data is available, Afro-descendant women experience significantly high maternal mortality rates due to medical neglect and entrenched biases in healthcare. Afro-descendant women with disabilities are at even greater risk of poor health outcomes and violence. Yet, in many countries, the absence of disaggregated data keeps these inequities invisible, preventing effective policy responses. As we embark on the second International Decade for People of African Descent, we must build on the powerful activism that has highlighted contributions of African-descendant-led movements towards equality, peace, and prosperity. These movements have successfully advocated for affirmative action policies and legal protections against racial discrimination. UNFPA calls on government, civil society, and the international community to uphold human rights frameworks, invest in solutions that ensure equal opportunity, and eliminate racial and gender-based barriers in all spheres of life,

[Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations](#)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) jointly with the African Diaspora of Argentina, (DIAFAR) have systematically denounced the structural inequalities and ongoing human rights violations facing Afro-descendant communities in Argentina. DIAFAR calls for the reinstatement and full implementation of public policies that guarantee equality and non-discrimination. The current Government has dismantled the specific policies aimed at Afro-descendant and Indigenous peoples, deepening inequalities, marginalisation and structural racism. An example is the dissolution of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, INADI, and with it the Commission for the Recognition of the Afro-Argentinian Community. Added to this is the criminalisation of social protest and repression of defenders. DIAFAR has witnessed the persecution of trade unions and human rights movements with disproportionate use of force against protesters. Hate speech promoted by high-level officials generates a climate conducive to racist acts, such as the vandalization of the monument to María Remedios del Valle. The persistence of racial profiling by security forces remains a concern. The compulsory training for security forces on this issue and the creation of a register of racially-motivated arbitrary detentions, which are measures recommended by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Acosta-Martínez case, have not yet been implemented. DIAFAR calls on the Argentinian Government to reverse decisions and fulfil its international obligations. It calls on OHCHR and all states to urge the Argentinian Government to guarantee human rights for Afro-descendants and Africans.

International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN) welcomes the opportunity to participate in this important panel to observe the 60th anniversary of the adoption of ICERD. As ICERD was the first international convention to complement the two Covenants, its adoption and entry into force demonstrate the centrality of fighting racism for the achievement of human rights for all. ISMUN expresses its appreciation for the lead role of African and Caribbean states in initiating the negotiations for the Convention. Implementation of ICERD cannot be seen in isolation for implementing the DDPA. It should be stressed that the CERD Committee has adopted two General Recommendations, stressing the importance of the DDPA's



implementation and its dissemination. In its concluding observations, the CERD Committee regularly requests states to provide specific information on their implementation of the DDPA. In this regard, ISMUN notes a disturbing trend in some General Assembly resolutions related to the International Decade for People of African Descent to create a contradiction between ICERD and the DDPA whereby it reaffirms ICERD, but not the DDPA. Such trends indirectly contradict the good faith implementation of ICERD. Undermining the DDPA means undermining ICERD. The family belong together in the global combat against racism.

Geneva for the Human Rights is a training and policy studies organisation. Backed by the rise and spread of right-wing nationalist populism around the world, it witnesses the emergence of unashamed public discourses and practises of racist, xenophobia, misogyny and other forms of discrimination. The international community must take a stand to reaffirm principles of equality and dignity and engage with historically entrenched structures of oppression, exploitation and exclusion. Research provides for recognition on how race is gendered and gender is raced as well as many other factors which affect how one is allocated rights, privileges or deficits and limits to rights through the regulation of gender and race. Identities and narratives interconnect with other acts of power and identification, such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion and health status, among others. Intersectionality is vital to achieving substantive equality and does specifically address the manner in which racism, patriarchy, economic disadvantages and other discriminatory systems contribute to inequality that structures the position of women and men, races and other groups. Geneva for Human Rights calls on the UNHRC and global human rights actors to move beyond prejudice or colourblind approaches and to push for true equality and non-discrimination.

The **International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities** stresses that ICERD and the DDPA exist side by side as the most important instruments that we are relying on in our cause against racism. The Federation has noted with appreciation that in its concluding remarks, the CERD Committee regularly requests to State Parties to report on how they implemented the DDPA. This is very important because it shows that ICERD and the DDPA are standing together against racism. The Federation asks to the Chair of the CERD Committee if he could provide an assessment on the extent that states that have made efforts on the implementation on the DDPA as well as its dissemination.

China Ethnic Minorities Association for External Exchanges underscores that with the colonial expansion, racism emerged and the constantly triggered conflicts and hatred have caused immense sufferings on human society. China always opposes all forms of racial discrimination. From the super old dating back to over 2,000 years ago to the prevailing 214-hour visa-free transit policy, China consistently embraces the world with an open attitude. Today's world is fraught with uncertainties and racism can hardly absorb itself from the blame. In some countries, law enforcers still hold a presumption of guilt against people of colour with the use of excessive force against peaceful anti-racism protests. Some public figures and media make inflammatory racist remarks, all of which constitute systemic racial discrimination. Most notably, in recent years, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and EU countries have witnessed a sharp increase in racial discrimination and hostile crimes. The Asian and African Americans are still trapped in numerous troubles in daily life and on-fire treatments in many respects, which call for prompt reflections from the international community.



The **World Jewish Congress** states that sixty years ago, the world took a decisive step towards justice with the adoption of ICERD. Yet today we must ask, have we truly fulfilled this promise? The Jewish people know too well the cost of hatred left unchecked. From the horrors of the Holocaust to the persistence of anti-Semitism and racial hatred today, the world is reminded that intolerance, if ignored, festers and spreads. Alarming, the world is witnessing a sharp rise in anti-Semitism across the globe. The violent attacks on Jewish communities, the resurgence of old-age conspiracies and the normalisation of anti-Jewish rhetoric, even in mainstream discourse. Synagogues, cemeteries and Jewish institutions are being desecrated. Online platforms have become breeding grounds for anti-Semitic hate speech and disinformation, fuelling dangerous ideologies that threaten not only Jews, but the very fabric of our diverse societies. This rise does not occur in isolation. It is part of a broader global surge in racism, xenophobia and intolerance, and it is the world's collective responsibility to confront it with unwavering resolve. Words alone are not enough. The World Jewish Congress calls on all states to fully implement ICERD in all its commitments. Education must be at the forefront, teaching respect, historical truth and the dangers of racial hatred. Governments must strengthen legal frameworks, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable. Social media platforms must take stronger action against the spread of online hate. Today, it is not only a commemoration, but a call to action. Let us reaffirm that racism, anti-Semitism and bigotry in other forms have no place in our world. The time for pledges has passed. The time for action is now.

Partners for Transparency stresses that today's commemoration is an opportunity to renew the world's commitment to redouble efforts to fight against racism, which has a harmful impact on millions of people around the world. Partners for Transparency urges the UNHRC to take action against the multiplication and manifestations of racism against Muslims and Arabs living in the United States. The US authorities are in favour of protests that provide support to Israel, but at the same time, they are opposed to any similar protest in favour of the Palestinians and their rights. They even arrest arbitrarily all participants in such protests. Mahmoud Khalil, the student who was detained on 15 March to be expelled from US territory is a prime example. He is a student at Columbia University. This is a blatant example of double standards. Partners for Transparency urges the international community to take necessary measures to overcome those challenges. It urges the US to step up its legislation and to reaffirm policies to guarantee equality for all and to combat racism in an effective manner.

Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra (Black Women Institute from Brazil) reaffirms its collective responsibility to move from commitments to concrete implementation in the fight against racism. Despite significant progress, racism and racial discrimination remain among the biggest challenges of our time. Africans and people of African descent continue to face the lasting consequences of systems shaped by enslavement, colonialism, and exclusion. Geledés acknowledges the important efforts carried out by the Intergovernmental Working Group on DDPA and highlights the stronger leadership of Brazil in the ongoing process toward the next Declaration on the Rights of People of African Descent. This first draft represents an important step in the fight against racism and is essential to preserve its progress language, especially regarding justice for Africans and people of African descent. At a time when far-right movements use racism and sexism as political tools, we must stand united in defending human rights and advancing racial justice. We cannot allow political circumstances to undermine the



implementation of ICERD, the DCPA, or the forthcoming Declaration. What we need now is political will, coherency, and investment.

Legal Analysis and Research Public Union points out that this year marks the 65th anniversary of the first French nuclear test in the Algerian desert, which took place in February 1960. On that tragic day, France detonated its first nuclear bomb in southwestern Algeria, resulting in a devastating humanitarian and environmental catastrophe. The consequences of this disaster continue to cast a long shadow over present and future generations. This nuclear test was not an isolated event, but marked the beginning of a series of 16 other successful tests. This colonial mindset aligned with broader patterns of racial discrimination against Algerians by the French State. France should take full historical and legal responsibility for the consequences of its nuclear test in Algeria, implementing practical measures to address the resulting damage, including full disclosure of all related documents, identification of radioactive waste burial sites, environmental remediation of contaminated areas. The Union emphasises the urgent need for the French Government to fully acknowledge the nuclear crimes committed by France in Algeria and to accept legal and moral responsibility which should be accompanied by the fair compensation of the victims.

Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan (RSKS) shares with the UNHRC not just a word, but a vision of a world where every individual's dignity is respected regardless of their race, colour, or ethnic origin. India's commitment to combating racial discrimination stands as a beacon of hope and progress through a comprehensive legislative, legal, educational programme and social awareness campaign. India has demonstrated its dedication to creating an improving society. These effects have not only fostered social harmony but have also set an example in the fight against racial discrimination. RSKS believes this change begins at the local level and it has implemented numerous programmes that promote understanding, respect, and unity among all people. RSKS stands resolutely in its opposition to racial discrimination in all its forms through education, advocacy, and communities. RSKS continues to build bridges of understanding and tear down walls of prejudice. RSKS appeals to the UNHRC to strengthen and intensify efforts to eliminate racial discrimination globally. It urges the adoption of more robust measures to establish a world of peace, equality, and mutual respect for all.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

28 State Delegations

3 Inter-Governmental Organizations and UN Agencies

10 Non-Governmental Organizations