



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### Intersessional High-Level Panel Discussion between Democracy and Racism

26 August 2025



#### OPENING REMARKS

**Ms. Nada AL-NASHIF, Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Democracy thrives or withers on the extent to which all of us enjoy our right to meaningful and inclusive participation in public and political affairs without discrimination. Such participation is essential for achieving racial justice, equality, and the commitment to pluralism ensures that decision-making becomes more sustainable and public institutions more effective, transparent, accountable and able to serve all communities.

Too often, however, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance pervade democratic structures and discourse, undermining the very foundations of democracy and the social cohesion safeguarding it. Consultations convened by OHCHR when drafting the Office's guidance note revealed that **pervasive racism continues to impede the effective participation** of people of African descent in public affairs. Disaggregated data, where available, points to low levels of representation of marginalised racial and ethnic groups in political and public lives, with women particularly affected.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, for example, has noted that **barriers to women's participation** are in part linked to gender-based violence and to deeply rooted



historical patterns of discrimination stemming from colonialism and enslavement. A recent analysis by a non-governmental organisation found that disparities persist in reflecting the EU's demographic reality, with the proportion of members of the European Parliament identifying as belonging to racial and ethnic minorities remaining modest - approximately 4% during the period 2019-2024.

The fundamental freedoms of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association are indispensable pillars of democracy. Freedom of expression is meant to empower individuals in order that they can participate in public debates, hold authorities accountable and foster transparency in governance. However, it should not extend to incitement to discrimination, to hostility or to violence. Yet, across the globe, a wave of **harmful and dehumanising narratives** are fuelling fear and division, as well as inciting hatred and violence. Those targeted are often people of African descent, migrants, refugees, Roma, Indigenous people, minorities and other groups. **Toxic rhetoric is amplified by social media** and AI-generated content is also used to manipulate public opinion and exploit public fears. Some political leaders have openly emboldened discrimination for political gain.

The Deputy High Commissioner encourages all participants to reflect all along this discussion on how to urgently and effectively address these challenges to buttress **effective participation of marginalised racial and ethnic groups**. Comprehensive intersectional measures grounded in international human rights law and supported by adequate funding are essential. The Deputy High Commissioner names a few initiatives that are striving towards this goal.

Last year, for example, **Mexico** enacted a significant constitutional reform that affirms the rights of Indigenous people, recognising them as subjects of public law with legal status and rights to self-determination. **Canada** has involved communities affected by racism in developing laws on the collection, use and disclosure of data, informing the development of the 2022 Anti-Racism Data Act. In the **European Union**, Roma organisations have actively participated in the development of the EU framework for Roma inclusion. In **Ireland**, the National Action Plan Against Racism for the period 2023 to 2027 was informed by written submissions and online survey and consultations, including from individuals who had experienced racism, from civil society and community organisations.

OHCHR stands **ready to assist states**, including, first, to adopt special measures and institutional arrangements that can promote and ensure equal representation and participation, and second, to anchor legal and policy response in data disaggregated by race or ethnic origin in line with a human rights-based approach. OHCHR encourages states to establish or to strengthen independent national human rights institutions with adequate resources and robust mandates to combat racism and racial discrimination.

National Action Plans Against Racism, if inclusive of specific time-bound commitments and effective monitoring, can also be a critical tool for moving from aspirational statements and commitments to concrete results. Complementary strategies, such as education, awareness-raising and creating safe, enabling environments, offline and online, are equally important. Above all, we must tackle the root causes, in particular by **addressing legacies of enslavement and colonialism** and delivering reparatory justice.



On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and look ahead to the 25th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) next year, the Deputy High Commissioner calls on all states to reaffirm their commitment to the effective **participation and representation of marginalised racial and ethnic groups in decision-making processes**. This discussion should provide an opportunity to reflect, to share best practise to advance our understanding and, most of all, to accelerate our commitment to action to end the scourge of racism.

#### **H.E. Ms. Anielle FRANCISCO DA SILVA, Minister for Racial Equality of Brazil**

This panel is the perfect occasion to reflect on a truth that is both urgent and often overlooked, racism and democracy cannot coexist. **Racism is not only a moral failure** – it is a structural force that silences voice, blocks access to rights and distorts the very foundation of democratic life.

When entire communities are kept at the margins, democracy becomes incompetent. Democracy can only prosper when it reflects the diversity of its people. This means dismantling the systemic inequalities that have historically excluded Afro-descendants, Indigenous peoples, women and other marginalised communities from power and decision-making.

Brazil proudly led the resolutions that brought this panel together. Brazil strongly believes that **racial justice and democracy are inseparable**. It believes that building truly inclusive democracies requires international policy to promote racial equality, expand political representation and combat hate speech and racial violence in all its forms.

As a black woman and Minister for Racial Equality in Brazil, H.E. Ms. Anielle FRANCISCO DA SILVA recalls that representation is not symbolic, but transformational. In closing, she calls on all participants to use this space to reaffirm the collective commitment to ensure that every voice counts and that no democracy is complete until it serves peoples equally.

#### **STATEMENTS BY PANELLISTS**

##### **H.E. Mr. José Francisco CALI TZAY, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Guatemala to UN Geneva**

H.E. Mr. José Francisco CALI TZAY is honoured to take part in this panel as representative of Guatemala, a country which has supported UNHCR's efforts to place this topic on the international agenda and which is acting as a co-sponsor for the **resolution on the incompatibility between racism and democracy**. This resolution is a key reminder of the fact that democracy can only be full when it ensures the effective inclusion and participation of all cultural and ethnic entities.

In theory, democracy seeks to ensure full citizen participation, full respect for fundamental freedoms and equal rights. However, in various parts of the world this goal has not been achieved, especially from the perspective of systematic racism, marginalisation and structural exclusion. The Latin American region is still home to **structural forms of political exclusion**.

When Indigenous peoples seek to achieve political participation or defend their territories, they often are faced with **lawsuits and anti-terrorism laws** are used against them. Moreover,



educational systems do not recognise **Indigenous languages**, which hampers access to health care in rural areas and there is also economic inequality and low levels of political representation in decision-making fora, especially with regard to vulnerable groups such as women, persons with disabilities and Indigenous peoples who continue to face barriers when seeking to exercise their collective rights.

In **Latin America**, there are many positive examples. In **Brazil**, the Minister for the Environment is an Indigenous person. In **Mexico**, recently, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice has been nominated from an Indigenous community. In **Guatemala**, various female civil servants in high positions have been appointed to lead governmental agencies. There is also the high-level panel as the main forum for dialogue between Indigenous peoples and the authorities who meet periodically to discuss health, education and environmental protection amongst others and to promote actively the participation of Indigenous women.

Therefore, Guatemala invites the UNHRC to encourage states to strengthen legal frameworks that will ensure **full recognition of the collective rights** of Indigenous peoples and people of African descent, avoiding generic categories which dilute those rights. The Council should also ensure the participation of Indigenous peoples without describing them as NGOs.

At the regional level, the Ambassador mentions the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Organisation of American States and great progress achieved in three decades, while noting the emergence of significant setbacks. With this in mind, Guatemala calls on states to put into practise the principle of leaving no one behind – essential to ensure a **democracy free of racism**. In closing, Guatemala firmly reasserts that democracy and racism are incompatible. Genuine democracy is built on equality, equity, pluralism, and justice.

**Dr Ibrahima GUISSÉ, Member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the ICERD, which is a cornerstone of the international framework seeking to prevent racism. This 60th anniversary is the opportunity to renew its commitment to ensuring everybody is treated on an equal footing without any discrimination based on race. Democracy is usually defined as a form of government for the people by the people. However, it is **not just the rule of majority**, but it is a state in which all people, including minorities, are fully engaged.

For this reason, the balance of power exists and people can aspire to become the leaders of tomorrow. It is important to understand the fundamental **pluralist nature of society** for democracy to flourish. Therefore, measures which create exclusion in neighbourhoods or in cities must be countered, for democracy aims to guarantee the full participation of all citizens regardless of their origin.

However, diversity - be it ethnic, cultural or religious - is sometimes perceived negatively by a dominating majority and this can lead to division and fault lines. It was found that **new technologies are used increasingly in order to spread hate speech** and also to fragilize democratic institutions. There are extremist and nationalist tendencies which are articulating xenophobic and racist discourse against a group of persons. This is also an existential risk for democracy. The historic root causes must be addressed.



Many societies are fascinated by history and within societies there are **many forms of inequality that are handed down from one generation to another** that are structural and that continue to produce nefarious impacts. Addressing these impacts, including through restorative justice, is also an important issue. It is important to explore the possibilities and prospects of turning our world into a better place - a world in which the architecture of global governance would be better balanced.

In the **African Union**, 2025 is a year dedicated to African people with a focus on reparations. The new UN decade on people of African descent is beginning this year. One might wonder how can these two initiatives offer a new framework for strategic reflection on how to address structural injustice and make recommendations on reparation.

Racism involves a denial of equality and it is based on discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity. Democracy is deformed when a particular group is oppressed. The function of the law - both national and international - is to ensure that people act in order to prevent discrimination. First, we have to ensure legally binding protections. Secondly, we have to clearly impose upon our governments and ourselves an obligation to not act in a discriminatory way. The rule of law offers a highly necessary framework for ensuring that **democracy is not but an empty wish on paper** but a reality founded on equality.

It is in this vein that the ICERD comes into play as it offers a key framework at the international level for ensuring inclusive and dynamic democracies can thrive. With a high number of ratifications - **182 up to date** - it is one of the most widely ratified conventions in the world and plays a key role in underscoring the incompatibility between democracy and racism. The Committee is tasked with monitoring implementation of the Convention by States Parties and assessing how they are acting in terms of discrimination against multiple different communities with the view to ensuring that all those communities can exercise their rights without discrimination.

In terms of **best practises** when examining States Parties' reports, the ICERD stresses first of all the need to **strengthen legislative frameworks**. The Convention demands that states apply laws and implement them in all areas of public and private life that counter discrimination. Anti-discrimination laws are therefore recommended as are amendments in order to bring legislation in line with the provisions of the ICERD. In particular, the Committee often finds that the definition of racism is not always fully in line with in Article 1 of the Convention. Many states do not explicitly criminalise racist discourse and hate speech as is required by Article 4 of the Convention.

Secondly, the Committee also notes that many states create institutions and appoint Special Envoys or Representatives for combating discrimination. However, they are often plagued by a lack of resources which mean they have no teeth. Thirdly, **reliable data** is essential. Many states or many communities within states parties are invisible in the data. Although many countries have made progress by including measures to combat discrimination in their statistics, much work remains to be done. The Committee cannot always fully assess the situation on the ground without **country visits**.

Furthermore, the importance of the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention cannot be overstated. The Committee has found that there has been progress in certain fields





such as participation, but those groups that are protected by the Convention continue to suffer from discrimination and limited access to their rights. The ICERD underscores the importance of ensuring that human rights are integrated at all levels and that the **history of colonialism and slavery are factored into** this.

The fight against racism and democracy are not only incompatible, but it is essential to ensure that the Convention is properly implemented in order to strengthen democracy. A world which is in need of peace and democracy is a place where it is important for the UN Human Rights Council to continue to pay heightened attention to the threats and challenges that are weighing over democracy.

**Ms. Anastasia CRICKLEY, Chair, International Council of Minority Rights Group**

Working as an immigrant with the Irish community in the UK of the 1970s was a rapid personal introduction to racism as Irish people were wrongfully convicted of crimes they did not commit and Irish accents evoked unwarranted responses reminiscent of the no blacks, no Irish, no dog signs of the 1950s. In the 1980s, upon her return to Ireland, she noted that a monocultural non-racist society allowed deep-rooted racism against Travellers to fester, which illustrated for her the complexities and contradictions - which are well outlined academically - of post-colonial **participation by both colonised and colonisers in reinforcing racism** at every level. This reality needs to be addressed not just in Ireland, but also regionally and globally.

Her commitment as a community worker to the rights of marginalised to participate in shaping and making policies affecting them has informed the work she has undertaken as an academic and a member of international institutions including the ICERD. States Parties to ICERD have committed to the elimination of racism and racial discrimination as defined in its article 1 ICERD and agreed to be reviewed by the Committee voluntarily regarding their progress in this direction. They committed to the elimination of preferences or exclusions based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin which have the **purpose or effect of denying or impairing equal enjoyment** of human rights and fundamental political, economic, social and cultural freedoms. This **understanding of racism on purpose or in effect** is well grounded in the individual experiences of members of minority groups.

However, these experiences also show how the reproduction of racism by society and institutions reflect the extent to which **racism is structurally embedded** and in effect systemic. Initiatives to address it require change at every level. Procedures on how work is done, policies and how they were conceived and shaped and in the culture and thinking which inform both.

**Policy response** must also be concerned with assimilation, accommodation or toleration which she absolutely abhors or cultural pluralism which leads differential power relations intact cannot bring such change. It requires integration, but also acknowledging that groups experiencing racism are not only newly arrived - although all newly arrived groups do experience racism - but present for generations to inclusion in the development of an intercultural society where diversity is celebrated.

**Education** is often quoted as the key priority in this regard. In any discussion about education and the barriers to participation, the racism that impedes access to and participation in education for marginalised and minority groups at each level needs to be acknowledged. To



remove such barriers, **anti-racism education** needs to be mandatory, it needs to be examined and it needs to be part of promotional procedures in all roles and institutions.

**Racism is a toxic global discourse** which uses AI and social media to divide and instrumentalise the marginalised whether from groups experiencing racism or groups which have been impoverished and pushed aside in the interest of power and profit by a few or corrupt maintenance of power. **Hierarchies of oppression** serve to reinforce this, but the continuing legacies of slavery and colonialism for people of African descent and Indigenous peoples persist as the centuries-old discrimination against Roma and travellers and other associated sometime nomadic groups.

The **normalisation of racism** and of particular forms of racism and their implications for targeted groups have a resonance with the current horrors of Gaza. They were part of the drives to obliterate which was the holocaust of World War II and are well understood by Roma and Indigenous peoples throughout history as well as by others globally, including Armenians and Australian Aboriginal groups. Today's focus on the incompatibility between democracy and racism is reflected in every and all understandings of democracy and its underpinnings, including UNHRC resolutions. A good starting point is to reflect in Ireland's first National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism saying *inter alia* 'what we were against but also what we were for.'

Democracy as the rule of law of the majority cannot be used to undermine and violate the rights of minorities or of minorities within minorities, including religious minorities which can become the easy target. **Democracy requires the ongoing mirror of the critique civil society can provide**, the creative tension which helps make it an instrument of rights rather than the ongoing attempts which are now evident from Beijing to London and Washington and points in between which seek to insist otherwise. The right to **participate in public and political affairs is a founding hallmark of democracy** and needs checks and balances which go well beyond national and local elections which are of course very important. Participation by minorities as part of the judiciary and as lawyers and attorneys is also important as is participation in policy and programme making and shaping.

In Ireland, **Traveller and Roma organisations** over decades have engaged nationally with government and local authorities to address racism and realise rights. Traveller organisations sought a cross-government strategy for progress, targeted health and education strategies, and participated in their development. They are now part of monitoring implementation of them. All of this was useful and informed the development of policies and actions for change.

However, the **challenge of implementation** remains, in particular the challenge to put in place targets, timelines and resources required at every level to make change real in the lived experience of those the policies are for as well as the collective progress towards full parity in Irish society which is their right. Direct engagement with Human Rights Treaty Bodies has also played an important role for Travellers leading over a period to **recognition of Traveller ethnicity**.

Irish Traveller organisations have also played leading roles in broader civil society struggles. This included work across EU member states during the 1990s which contributed to the development of the **EU directive on racism**, a cause which was propelled in no small way by civil society



throughout the European Union. In **Liberia**, it was the efforts of women, including minority women, who camped outside Charles Taylor's residence that quickened in no small way the end of the then civil war.

Looking at recent EU developments, including the **EU Migration Pact**, civil society involvement is more tightly boundaried. The transposition and implementation of the Pact is of considerable concern for democracy as migrants could be increasingly criminalised and excluded including through bilateral agreements. The associated **racialisation of migration categories** in this and other areas globally divides and discriminates systemically and contributes to ongoing development of control by the powerful who might be described as past and present colonisers.

In a very concerning context with the **rise of misinformation and disinformation**, sometimes small but loud far-right movements also using the internet to extend their influence on political discourse when not in power. Of concern are the widening and deepening populist authoritarian trends and shrinking of civil society space. Hate crime and hate speech are on the rise globally and require robust legislation as well as the full attention to the provisions of General Recommendation no. 35.

Racism in all its forms has to be named and understood also as part of the **complex and contradictory construction of societies** globally. The concern for disaggregated data expressed by all UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies not only to name and blame, but on the simple basis that addressing an issue demands known something of its extent needs to be fully implemented by participating by states parties to all of the conventions. Participation by racialized communities in public affairs is essential for democracy and brings benefit to all.

Ways to include all whatever their background religion or status in the state need and can be found as the Council of Europe's principles on participation in local elections demonstrate. Participation does not guarantee implementation, but change in official culture is required. The realities of racism far and within minorities and for minority and women and girls mean that addressing racism in promoting democracy has to have an intersectional basis.

In closing, the language of duty bearers is easy to articulate but **the journey from needs to rights needs more consideration, courage and commitment**, including with regard to whose rights come first in a world where racism has old and new faces.

**Ms. Tea JALIASHVILI, First Deputy Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)**

On the occasion of the Helsinki Final Act 15 years ago, the OSCE participating states reaffirmed the universal significance of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race sex language or religious. They agreed on the idea that lasting security could not be achieved without functioning democratic institutions and respect for human rights. Participating states thus committed to address all forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance as well as to guarantee the effective participation in public affairs of persons belonging to the national minorities and underrepresented groups.

Despite long-standing commitments and certain progress made in recent years particularly to prevent and counter this phenomenon, **intolerance, discrimination and hate** remain a serious





and pervasive issue in the OSCE region, corroding democracy and creating the social divisions and polarisation. In many places minorities continue to be excluded from full participation in the society which can be deepened mistrust and weaken social cohesion.

**Hate crime** as the most violent manifestation of bias and intolerance continues to affect the lives of thousands of people across the OSCE region and destroys the very fabric of our societies. As they convey a message of rejection to those they target in their communities, hate crimes are a serious threat to the construction of inclusive and democratic societies. If left unaddressed, they bear the potential of escalating into wider conflicts.

From ODIHR's perspective, the **three key drivers** behind this increase in intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes include **harmful stereotypes** against migrants, refugees, minorities, people of African descent, Muslims, and Jews - frequently disseminated both online and offline. Sadly, continued wave of antisemitic and anti-Muslim discrimination and hate raging from online and offline hate speech through the damage to personal property, desecration of places of worship, to murder threats and even homicide. Those developments exposed and exacerbated **pre-existing patterns** of prejudice, stereotyping and marginalisation. Furthermore, hate crimes are **under-reported and under-recorded** across the region, and states lack reliable information about the nature and scope of racist and xenophobic hate crimes.

Irrespective of these challenges, ODIHR develops and uses tools and practises that ODIHR. First and most, engagement with and **empowerment of civil society** as well as facilitating dialogue and cooperation between targeted communities and the authorities, which helps building coalitions across the groups - communities that might otherwise remain isolated or disconnected. **Meaningful conversation** between individuals challenges stereotypes, counters conspiracy theories and reduces prejudices.

For instance, ODIHR's **report on Roma and Sinti** identifies good practises that empower Roma and Sinti organisations, support human rights monitoring, and equip local authorities to involve communities in addressing local issues, with the impact of fostering ownership. ODIHR has also developed a guidance on coalition-building and has facilitated dialogue among different national and ethnic minorities, cultures, religions and beliefs to foster equal, inclusive and cohesive societies.

Another important tool is increasing the **participation of the underrepresented groups in policy-making processes**, which is essential for more inclusive and tolerant societies. For example, with regard to electoral processes, ODIHR closely cooperates and communicates with civil society organisations and underrepresented groups in order to look into policy-making processes and legal development processes. ODIHR is guided by a very clear approach - simply talk and listen to minorities themselves. ODIHR has also developed dedicated methodological tools such as the handbook on observing and promoting the participation of national minorities in electoral processes, and is about to launch the **guidelines for assessing and promoting the electoral participation of Roma and Sinti stakeholders**.

Last but not least, **strengthened mechanisms and systems to address hate crimes**, amongst which ODIHR's annual hate crime report which represents the largest data set of its kind on hate crimes and serves as valuable resource for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, civil society



organisations and other stakeholders. ODHIR also issued practical guidelines on anti-Roma, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic and anti-Christian hate crimes and practical guide on hate crime prosecution at the intersection of the hate crime and criminalised hate speech.

In closing, Ms. Tea JALIAHVILI emphasizes that only with a **whole-of-society approach** will we be able to reach the common improvements, thereby stressing the need for a more inclusive mainstreaming and integrated approaches at the legal, policy and institutional levels.

### REPLIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

**Ms. Tea JALIAHVILI** emphasizes the need for cooperation for substantive advancements, whereby efforts have to be deployed on the policy, legislative and institutional levels. Engagement and close dialogue with civil society organisations is also of utmost importance.

**Ms. Anastasia CRICKLEY** appreciates the reflection on racism as an abuse of power. Addressing racism in all its forms also means addressing the systemic power that goes with it. As a utmost priority, she calls on states to implement the commitments made in the Conventions ratified. She further voices concern over the instrumentalization of racism at an increasingly high speed since 2019 when the previous panel was held - due to AI and the Internet. This has amounted in a number of ways to an extension of the toxic division existing between marginalised groups and the rest of society. Ms. Anastasia CRICKLEY further points to the need for collective collaboration and a whole-of-government approach, which also acknowledges that racism - particularly since 2019 and even before - is not just an issue for citizens. It is also an issue for migrants and for non-citizens in all states. Lastly, she notes that the whole-of-government approach, which acknowledges that all forms of racism cannot just be addressed by one general approach, requires to look both at racism in its entirety and also at the discrete forms that it takes at different points in time, including the intersection between racism and a variety of other manifestations of oppression.

**Dr Ibrahima GUISSÉ** extends its gratitude to states for their renewed commitment to move forward with recommendations and to offering recommendations to the panellists. Many have put on the table food for thought. The global trend in the world is an increase in racism and supremacy. This narrative must be countered. As evoked in his preliminary remarks, the United Nations and its instruments must participate in efforts to combat such global trend.

**H.E. Mr. José Francisco CALI TZAY** points to the existence of different forms of discrimination such as economic and religious discrimination which must also be addressed. While commending the election of an Indigenous person as member of the CERD Committee, he regrets that there is just one more Indigenous person in another UN Human Rights Treaty Body - just one among the 180 experts that are part of the UN Treaty Bodies. Therefore, Ambassador Calí Tzay calls upon states to continue to put forth Indigenous and Afro-descendant candidates, men and women alike.



## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

### Views Expressed by State Delegations

**Armenia** reaffirms its unwavering commitment to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. The country remains deeply concerned over the fact that, despite global efforts, manifestations of ethnic and racial hatred threaten peace and development, undermining social cohesion and stability. Racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance are incompatible with the principles of rule of law and the UN Charter. Armenia recognises the crucial role of education in combating racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination. The Government of Armenia continues to undertake targeted efforts to promote equal access to quality education for all, and underscores the importance of upholding the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. In fragile contexts, racial hatred manifests itself through the targeting of, incitement to violence and even atrocity crimes against protected groups. Armenia further stresses the role of regional and global human rights mechanisms and monitoring bodies. In the course of the last years, Armenia underwent the reviews before the CERD Committee as well as the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, and is now working on the follow-up to their recommendations. Strongly convinced that the fight against racism should be at the centre of any efforts towards conflict prevention and reconciliation, Armenia is also deploying efforts to bring its positive contribution to multilateral initiatives.

**Belgium** vocally affirms that racism and discrimination cannot be tolerated because they run counter to the fundamental principles underpinning a democratic state. Despite progress achieved, many challenges remain in the fight against racism, including certain systemic ones. The Belgian government has committed to developing a new inter-federal action plan that is ambitious and effective against racism, discrimination and intolerance. Describing the involvement of civil society as essential for this process to succeed, Belgium financially supports civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders who combat racism. In this field, the services tasked with law enforcement also play a key role. Belgium recently hosted a visit by the Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement, which allowed to shed light on best practises and challenges. Belgium will continue to cooperate with the UN entities focussed on the fight against racism and encourages all member states to do the same.

**Bolivia** recalls that one of the findings of the roundtable in 2019 was ‘the rise in many places around the world of various ideologies and political parties and extremist groups and movements, including neo-Nazi groups and skinheads.’ Six years on from that, strengthening the fight against racism is not just necessary but highly fundamental. Combating hate speech requires preventing it and addressing the root causes. One of the best ways to do so is to foster intercultural and intra-cultural dialogue. Despite the fact that major steps have been taken such as the adoption of legal frameworks against discrimination, affirmative measures and recognition of diversity as a consolidating factor for society, structural racism persists, which limits access to justice and basic services as well as the political representation of millions, especially migrants, people of African descent, Indigenous peoples, peasants, minorities, and people living in rural areas. Today, the world is confronted with new challenges, hate speech online, the instrumentalization of social networks in order to spread intolerance, and also the rise of extremist movements which seek to normalise that speech. In the face of these challenges,



freedom of expression, a pillar of democracy, cannot be used as a shield for inciting hate speech or racial violence. In its 2009 constitution, Bolivia embraced a form of participatory democracy that is community-based and representative. This redefined Bolivia's democracy as an intercultural democracy on the basis of the principles of interculturality, tolerance, and complementarity. Democracy can only be full when it embraces diversity, the plural nature of every society, without any barriers that might impede the full exercise of individual and collective rights, including the right to development of peoples.

**Colombia's** political constitution of 1991 paved the way towards creating new fora for citizen participation in the context of participatory democracy, which has given a more active role to citizens in political decision-making and in building a more representative state inclusive of people of African descent and indigenous peoples. Therefore, Colombia rejects all forms of racial discrimination as well as violent and discriminatory practises that are of a racist nature. Colombia reaffirms its commitment to complying with the ICERD as well as implementation of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action against Racism and Xenophobia and the Declaration of the Second Decade on People of African Descent. Colombia is also promoting a declaration on the rights of peoples of African descent, and has called on states for them to directly tackle the consequences of colonialism and slavery, which are manifest in socioeconomic inequalities, marginalisation and violence. In 2023, the Colombian government created the Intersectoral Government of Historic Reparation at the national level. Reparation means measures and actions that seek to compensate the descendants of victims of the transatlantic slave trade and European colonialism, amongst others. Colombia will thus continue to promote the agenda of restorative justice in various international forums.

**Cuba** reaffirms that racism is not just incompatible with the values of democracy, it is also so with human dignity. Despite the many mechanisms that exist in the UN to fight racism, which is an unacceptable scourge, racism persists, principally in some developed countries in which there is a proliferation of hate speech, supremacy, racial discrimination, and all of this is often institutionalised. There is police brutality against Afro-descendants, homophobia, and racial profiling, among other forms of intolerance. These countries continue to fail to recognise and offer reparation, fair reparation, for the historic consequences for transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and neocolonialism. The Cuban Constitution prohibits discrimination in any form and for any reason. It also recognises human dignity as a supreme value in the enjoyment of human rights. Cuba will continue to call for the full implementation of the Durbin Declaration and Programme of Action and maintains its active cooperation with the CERD Committee and UNHRC mechanisms when it comes to tackling racism. Cuba will also continue to participate actively and constructively in the negotiations for the necessary UN Declaration for the Recognition of Individual and Collective Rights of Afro-descendants.

**El Salvador** reaffirms its firm conviction that democracy and racism are absolutely incompatible. Democracy is based on equality, human dignity, and the participation of one and all. Racism, however, means exclusion and a denial of rights. Democracy is not merely a political system. It is a moral pact, recognising that all people have the same value and the same rights. This pact, however, is broken when racism finds space in our institutions, in our streets, or in our words. Fighting racism is not merely a moral necessity, but a democratic necessity. It requires a cultural change, firm norms, and inclusive policies that guarantee that no one be discriminated against



as a result of the colour of their skin, their origin, or their culture. The constitution of El Salvador, for instance, recognises equality before the law. It prohibits all restrictions based on nationality, race, sex, or religion. This mandate guides our public policy that promote full inclusion and participation of all sectors. It ensures the inclusion of Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and vulnerable groups. Inclusion strengthens social cohesion and the citizen participation. For this reason, El Salvador calls upon all states to put together strategies on racism in their democratic governance and meet their international commitments that they ensure accountability vis-a-vis all forms of racism.

**Ethiopia** welcomes the convening of this timely and important intersessional high-level panel discussion and would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all the speakers for their meaningful contributions. Ethiopia reaffirms that racism in all its manifestations is fundamentally incompatible with the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Democracy is rooted in equality, justice, inclusion, and the full participation of all peoples. Racism, by contrast, undermines these very foundations. It breeds exclusion, marginalisation, and dehumanisation and erodes the legitimacy of democratic institutions and processes. As a multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual nation, Ethiopia firmly believes that inclusion is fundamental to peace, stability, and sustainable development. Furthermore, Ethiopia remains a committed advocate of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the African Union's efforts to uphold democracy and human rights, and reaffirms its commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Ethiopia remains deeply concerned by the alarming resurgence of racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance around the world, often amplified by hate speech, extremist rhetoric, and online disinformation. The trend not only threatens vulnerable communities but also corrodes the fabric of democratic societies. In conclusion, Ethiopia reaffirms that combating racism is both a moral imperative and a foundation for genuine democracy. Stressing the need for strong legal protections, inclusive public policies, civic education, and accountable institutions in addressing systematic racism in all its forms, Ethiopia remains committed to working with all partners to build just, inclusive, and democratic societies.

**Ghana** on behalf of the African group welcomes the convening of this intersessional high-level panel discussion pursuant to UNHRC resolution 53/21. Democracy in all forms and practise is predicated on the principles of equality, participation and inclusion. Racism by contrast is rooted in exclusion, hierarchy and the denial of dignity. Where racism persists, whether overtly or institutionally, democracy is diminished. The African group recalls the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) which remains the most comprehensive framework for combating racism globally. The group reiterates its call for its full and effective implementation and urges all states to integrate its principles into national democratic processes. To this end, the African group highlights several good practises that can serve as models for democratic resilience against racism, most notably the establishment of independent equality bodies and national human rights institutions with mandates to address racial discrimination; the adoption of anti-racism legislation that includes robust enforcement and remedies for victims; the meaningful participation of racialized communities in political decision-making, including through electoral reform and affirmative measures; the integration of anti-racism education into school curricula and public discourse; and the collection of disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policy responses. In closing, the African group reiterates its support for the mandate of the Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement and calls for its adequate





resourcing. It also reaffirms its commitment to the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, whose work is vital to advancing racial equity within democratic frameworks.

**Jordan** states that this panel comes to reaffirm our common values. The UNHRC must rise up to its responsibility to uphold these human rights values without undermining any of them. By criminalising hatred and hate speech, inequality and discrimination, true democracy cannot be predicated on exclusion or discrimination. It is not an electoral mechanism. It is a system of values and a basis for the development of societies that is premised on human dignity. Where racism spreads, it undermines the foundations of democracy and opens the door wide to discrimination and racism. Jordan believes that social cohesion can only be realised by mutual respect. In this respect, Jordan has been maintaining the freedom of religion and belief and interculturalism. Common initiatives have been launched to enrich diversity. Our common responsibility today is to replace the human being back into the centre of good governance. Jordan believes that coexistence can only be realised with inclusion rather than exclusion.

**Mexico** points out that President Claudia Sheinbaum, who is the first woman Head of State in the country, has placed social justice at the heart of her mandate, recognising that racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance are acts of aggression that are incompatible with democracy. Eradicating them is therefore necessary in order to build a more inclusive society. Reforms to the Mexican federal constitution recognise Indigenous and Afro-Mexican peoples as subjects of public law, which is driving their full integration in the political, social, economic and cultural realms. Mexico will continue to work decisively and cooperate with civil society, with academia and the private sector and international organisations in order to build a society that is respectful of everybody's human rights.

The **Russian Federation** states that the anniversary of the victory over Nazism is an occasional first, unfortunately, to see how racism and discrimination on ethnic and linguistic and other grounds is continuing to be highly relevant, including in would-be democratic states. In Moldova, the anti-Russian acts have become a national policy and this is happening with means that run counter to international law and which run counter to the fundamental human rights. In Ukraine, Russian language is prohibited in all fields of public and private life and there is a cynical fight waged by Kiev against the Russian Orthodox Church. There are also politicians who are speaking out in favour of constructive dialogue with Russia who are being silenced. Media space is being cleansed. Seventeen Russian-speaking television channels were closed down in Moldova. Russia calls on the UNHRC and other human rights mechanisms to pay attention to the violations of Russian speakers in Moldova and Ukraine.

**South Africa** participates in this meeting with indelible memories of its apartheid past, where racism and racial manifestations kept the dream of democracy afar for too long, until the attainment of freedom in the year 1994 that paved the way for a non-racial and non-successful society. It is our view that democratic values such as equality, participation, and inclusion must form an integral part of the lived realities of all peoples, regardless of race, ethnicity, or region. There is no gainsaying that democracy and racism are incompatible and irreconcilable. South Africa maintains that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remains the most comprehensive framework for combating racism globally. Accordingly, South Africa reiterates call for its full and effective implementation and urges states to integrate its principles into national democratic processes. It remains of deep concern that historical injustices, including



slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, continue to shape contemporary manifestations of racism. Under the presentation of racial minorities in governance, the lack of political will to combat systemic racism and the limited implementation of international commitments continue to undercut efforts in combating this scourge. In addition, discriminatory practises continue to hamper individuals, including Africans and people of African descent, from participating fully in the public and political life of the countries in which they live, including the lack of the exercise of their full citizenship rights. Similarly, South Africa deplores the recurrent incidents of excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers against peaceful demonstrators defending the rights of Africans and people of African descent. Ignoring these realities constitutes a serious indictment on states and governments and threatens the democratic gains already made around the world. Accordingly, South Africa calls on states to take urgent measures to counter these trends, including through education, legislation, and accountability mechanisms. In particular, the country emphasises the critical role of education in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. In accordance with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, South Africa supports the calls by the African group for good practises that can serve as models for democratic resilience against racism, as articulated in the group statement delivered earlier in this meeting. South Africa's support for the anti-racism mechanisms of the UNHRC, such as the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and the Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement, whose work remains vital to advancing racial equality within democratic frameworks, remains unflinching. The country remains confident that the convening of this international meeting will shine a spotlight on the importance of strengthening the synergy between democracy and racial equality around the world.

**Tunisia** states that democracy is a collective system based on inclusivity and equality, not on discrimination and exclusion. And here I would like to reiterate the eagerness of Tunisia to combat all forms of discrimination, racial discrimination and xenophobia, as part of its constitutional commitment for equality between citizens and the protection of all persons living on its territories within the framework of the law and the national legislation and international commitments. As a reminder, Tunisia has been one of the first countries to abrogate enslavement and chattel slavery through an official document in 1846 and to adopt an organic law to combat racial discrimination in 2018, and reiterates its support for the ICERD and for the DDPA. Tunisia condemns the scourge of Islamophobia and hate speech and targeting on a discriminatory basis of Muslim populations in multiple countries. Tolerance and coexistence are part and parcel of democratic principles as part of the respect for the rule of law. Tunisia condemns in the strongest terms the crime of genocide perpetrated by the occupying power on a racist basis against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. Tunisia denounces the barbaric racist aggression and the policy of starvation and displacement that the defenceless Palestinian people are being subjected to and the aggressions that do not even spare healthcare facilities and health workers. Tunisia calls upon the international community to intervene swiftly in favour of a ceasefire and to allow immediate humanitarian access and to lift the repressive blockade on the occupied Palestinian territories. In closing, Tunisia reiterates its principled position in favour of the rights of the Palestinian people, particularly its right to self-determination and to establish an independent state on all of its territories with al-Quds as its capital.



### Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union** stresses that to be united in diversity is not just its ambition. It is the Union's motto and reflects its commitment to democracy, equality and human dignity. The Union's democratic societies cannot and must not tolerate any form of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. EU law obliges member states to criminalise racist and xenophobic hate crime and hate speech and to provide effective and proportionate penalties. Much can also be achieved beyond legislation. Initiatives such as the EU Internet Forum and the Radicalisation Awareness Network have proven highly effective in helping identify content online that may lead to radicalisation and dissemination of extreme ideologies. Education and societal engagement are equally important. EU member states adopt national plans that emphasise the fundamental role of education. The promotion of civil society organisations in the implementation of anti-racism plans is essential. The EU will soon present a renewed strategy to combat racism, building on experience gained so far, and will continue stepping up efforts and political engagement against violent extremists who fuel hatred through racism and xenophobia. The EU will keep protecting and promoting its common values.

The **Council of Europe** states that equality is a co-building block of democracy. The fact that the principle of equality was enshrined after World War II in the very first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines the importance of these human rights *per se*. The promotion of equality and inclusion, along with the fight against racism, hatred, and intolerance towards LGBTI persons, are essential for building strong and resilient democracies. In this context, the ongoing waves of hate speech need to be seen as an alarm bell. The contribution of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion, and of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance to Strengthening Democracy is threefold. First, the Council of Europe help member states implement intercultural inclusion policies. This contributes to ensuring that democracy continues to be built on the engagement of all. Second, the Council of Europe works intensively on the political participation of minority groups, with a focus on their empowerment and support in making their voices heard. The Council of Europe also assists member states in the implementation of European standards on preventing and combating hate speech and hate crime. The last two recommendations provide guidance to policymakers on how to protect adequately people exposed to discrimination. This is a key action for the benefit of the world society.

### Views Expressed by National Human Rights Institutions

The **Qatar National Human Rights Committee** states that democracy is not complete unless it is based on equality and justice and provides all members of society with the opportunity to participate effectively without discrimination or exclusion. The democratic experience, whatever its nature or form, must always strive to embrace diversity and ensure representation for all. However, it must be recognized that every country has its own specificities and that the path for democratic transformation may face challenges or require time. But what must remain constant is the commitment to fundamental principles of respecting human dignity, safeguarding freedoms and working to strengthen institutions of community participation. The Committee is keen to support any steps that enhance dialogue and understanding and consolidate the culture of rights and citizenry and stand against any practises that may lead to discrimination or exclusion on any basis. The Committee further hopes that this panel discussion will offer the



opportunity to exchange practises and lessons learned and to affirm that real democracy cannot be separated from the respect for human rights and the fight against all forms of racism.

The **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** stresses that at this critical moment in world affairs when populism, unilateralism and racism are growing in strength, forums such as this panel afford us the opportunity to observe common challenges, share successful efforts and forge new partnerships in defending our core democratic values. It is not a coincidence that the rise of racism and intolerance has coincided with the failure of many states to address deepening economic inequality and their failure to vindicate the human rights to housing, health and basic income. Democracies cannot hope to defeat racism unless they can demonstrate their capacity to deliver sustainable development for all. Economic inequality causes a breakdown of trust in political leadership and the mechanisms of democracy itself, leaving space for division, discontent and political polarisation to flourish. At moments of political or economic uncertainty, anti-democratic actors can exploit division and fear with unprecedented speed and reach through online hate speech, misinformation and disinformation. States and regional and global institutions need to prioritise the effective regulation of online hate speech and misinformation and the internet platforms on which they spread. Finally, investment in human rights education can lay the necessary groundwork to nurture an inclusive and democratic society. Media institutions and public representatives have a particular responsibility in how they frame narratives on issues of migration, international and temporary protection and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. In humanity's common struggle against racism and anti-democratic forces, courageous leadership is needed now more than ever.

#### **Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations and Other Stakeholders**

The **Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission** is grateful for the opportunity to restate that democracy and racism are opponents. Northern Ireland is witnessing racism and xenophobia. In 2024-2025, the number of racist hate crimes and incidents reached their highest level since recording began 20 years ago. Social media are being used to incite hatred and mobilise violent disorder on our streets. There is a growing number of so-called anti-immigration protests, resulting in intimidation and violence towards people from minority ethnic backgrounds, including at their homes and businesses. This is fuelled by misinformation and hate, advances no legitimate debate and violates the rights of some of the most vulnerable people. Whenever it happens, one must be honest and courageous and call it what it is - violence, disorder, criminality, not protest. Otherwise, this demeans us all. In Northern Ireland, some of the problem is systemic. For example, minority ethnic people are underrepresented in public life. As a consequence, institutions do not reflect the diversity of people they serve. Northern Ireland lacks ethnic equality monitoring, which leaves some communities invisible in the data that shapes policy. The international community must condemn and punish racism in all its forms and take proactive measures to tackle harmful, misinformed rhetoric. If we do not tackle it effectively, it will condemn society to living in hate, deprived of the wonderful contribution migration brings.

The **Human Rights Institute of Catalonia** recalls that 20 years ago, the Human Rights Commission adopted resolution 2005/36 titled 'The Incompatibility Between Democracy and Racism.' In that resolution, the Commission said it was alarmed by the rise of racism and xenophobia in political circles and public opinion and society. Today, it is more than just a question of alarm. Governments of Member States of the United Nations are headed by people



who use their economic and political clout, not just in words but also through actions to dehumanise people who historically have been discriminated against. These hate ideologies do not just corrode human dignity, but they undermine the fundamental principles of our democracies. All these leaders and politicians who today use such hate speech also trample all over democratic institutions, the separation of powers or the limits that human rights impose on the abusive exercise of power. States must firmly reaffirm that political platforms that are based on or praise racism and xenophobia are incompatible with democratic order. Hate speech is not protected by freedom of expression and we must firmly condemn any ideology that promotes racial supremacy. But words and a programme are not enough. To avoid repeating tragic moments from history, consistent action must be taken from the individual level to the collective global level in order to turn the tide back on disinformation and the attempts to discredit equality, human rights and democracy. Democracy hampers racists, lets be democrats and anti-racists.

The **International Organisation for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)** is deeply appalled and saddened by the rise of the evil scourge of racism and racial discrimination which has no place in a democratic world. Democracy and racism are fundamentally incompatible and where racism persists, democracy itself is undermined. The Organization remains particularly concerned by the numerous challenges and barriers that continue to obstruct progress in combating racism and racial discrimination. These challenges weaken good practises and threaten the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) in its entirety. Most notably, there is a lack of adequate publication, distribution and resourcing of the DDPA. Far too often, decision makers do not have access to this vital document. Informed and principled decision-making is not possible if the very framework guiding the fight against racism is not in their hands. Equally troubling is the disinformation and misinformation surrounding the DDPA which distorts its purpose and weakens international commitments towards its goals. Therefore, the DDPA must be well known, widely available and properly resourced to tackle the challenges addressed today. To this end, EA FORD and Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) recommend that states and the UN allocate dedicated funding for the publication, translation and broad dissemination of the DDPA and that training and awareness raising on the DDPA be integrated into decision making processes at national, regional and international levels. Only then can this landmark document serve as a guide toward good practises and address challenges in pursuit of a healthy democracy.

**International-Lawyers.org** emphasizes that democracy is not only a procedural system, it has principles of value that is predicated on equal treatment to all with no regards to race or ethnicity. When racism is entrenched in policies and social structures, it undermines the foundations of democracy in this respect. Civil education that counters racism is highly important to build resilience against racism and fanaticism. Those people in office who are discriminating against others on ethnic or sectarian grounds must be held accountable. Durban principles must be educated, and the Durban Declaration must be implemented in practise. In defending democracy, we have to refer to the widespread, the spread of hate speech based on religious discrimination. This undermines the rule of law and the democratic institutions. Therefore, the Iraqi institutions is indeed a glaring example for what we are talking about. Sectarian discourse is soaring during the election times. Therefore, International-Lawyers.org stresses the need for comprehensive legislations to counter discrimination if we are to build a real democracy. This includes equal opportunity for all, to education, to health, and to political participation.





**Association Ma'noa for Human Rights and Immigration** places emphasis on the epicentre of democracy resting on the belief that all people are equal, with equal voice, equal value, and equal rights under the law. Racism directly opposes this. It is an evil concept that already exceeds personal bias and is deeply entrenched in political systems, thus distorting said systems to further encourage inequality. In highlighting that these two concepts cannot coexist in the same sphere, the international community must enhance its actions in combating racism. In the two years following the establishment of this resolution, the world continues to see a rise in racism and hate-driven crime. Extremely racist rhetoric continues to be pushed across different platforms to which people of colour are continuously reduced to less than human. Political and prominent voices in the world mirror these rhetoric and further spew hate towards these different marginalised groups, fostering an atmosphere where racism is tolerated and, to an extent, accepted. How many lives need to be lost because of racism? How many people can this community afford to lose before states properly address this issue? Therefore, Ma'ona and Geneva International Centre for Justice call on states, their representatives, and the stakeholders to ensure that states uphold the good practises of the DDPA and address the issues of racism, which, as a deliberate dehumanising of people, it fundamentally contradicts the very essence of human rights.

**Aide Humanitaire aux Vulnérables du Congo** stresses how democracy and human rights are indissociable. The DRC is witnessing a drastic, dramatic reality in the east, where territories occupied by armed groups in these areas, the most basic human rights are trampled on. There are killings, massive displacements, sexual violence, forced recruitment of children and people who are denied access to education, health care. These systematic violations show that the absence of respect for human rights makes fragile social cohesion. It prevents all form of local democratic government. Where human rights are not guaranteed, democracy becomes an incomplete, unmet promise. We call upon member states to strengthen the protection of civilians in conflict areas, and in particular, children and women. The NGO calls upon the international community to support peace and reconciliation efforts, fighting against impunity. It further calls upon the Council to recall with force that democracy cannot flourish without the effective guarantee of human rights for all.

**Association Culturelle des Tamouls en France** states that the incompatibility between democracy and racism resonates profoundly with the experience of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The word democracy comes from *demos*, the people. But in Sri Lanka, democracy has been reduced to majoritarianism. Successive governments have made politics out of race, using Sinhala Buddhist nationalism to secure power and oppressing the Tamil people in the process. The new government came to power promising that it was pro-Tamil, that it would end racism and build brotherhood. Yet in reality, it continues the same policies as its predecessors. This government deceives the international community by speaking of inclusion, while in practise it builds its diplomacy on Buddhist supremacy and Sinhala linguistic dominance. When Tamil politicians or defenders speak of the Tamil race, the government calls it racist. But when it speaks of an inclusive society for all Sri Lankans, what it means is erasing Tamil identity. Under this false formula, Tamils are denied the distinct language, history and culture. This erasure is unacceptable because Tamil is the world's oldest living language, with written records dating back over 5000 years and roots reaching to the 3rd millennium BCE. Instead of celebrating this heritage, Sri Lanka seeks to bury it, just as it seeks to bury the truth of the genocide and the



disappeared. Until accountability for these crimes is ensured, and until Tamil identity is fully respected, democracy in Sri Lanka will remain only a mask for oppression. Democracy and racism cannot coexist. One must give way.

**International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)** hails the convening of this important intersessional panel and commends Brazil for its leadership. These are worrisome times for the world marked by an increase in political parties that have openly racist and discriminatory agendas against migrants and refugees, as well as by attacks and campaigns with defamation against elected parties that are of African or Muslim descent. For people to enjoy their human rights, they must be fully aware of their rights for the UN Programme for the Fight Against Racism and, first and foremost, the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action (DDPA) be effectively implemented locally and nationally and internationally, it must be constantly in the mind of the decision-makers around the world. The DDPA is among the least well-known of such documents from the UN. It is often a victim of deliberate disinformation as well. ISMUN is convinced that if a more efficacious effort can be made by the decision-makers regarding the implementation of the DDPA, the world would be in a much better position to vanquish the racist poison that continues to make victims of people the world over.

The **Shaanxi Patriotic Volunteer Association** affirms that democracy is the crowning success of human political civilisation and it hardlines people's rights, fairness, justice, etc., while racism violates the principles of equality, fosters discrimination and prejudice. The motto of the Association is loving one's own country without harming other nations' interests. Patriotism should rest on respect for the sovereignty interests of other countries and on joint development. The Association promotes exchanges and understanding among people. For instance, it has recently organised study tours to Afghanistan and minority regions in China, which allowed to understand that Afghanistan has lagged behind due to long-standing racial conflicts, and that minority regions in China have suffered meddling by external forces exploiting racial issues. In China, however, democracy has enabled all ethnic groups to coexist equally. The government has promoted the development of minority regions. This is a compelling example of democracy prevailing over racism. Internationally, the Association has initiated the International Patriotic Pact which was already endorsed by 116 NGOs in 50 countries. In closing, the Association calls on the international community to work together to counter racism with democracy, thereby upholding the international patriotic principles of loving one's own country.

## FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

**13** State Delegations

**2** Inter-Governmental Organizations

**2** National Human Rights Institutions

**9** Non-Governmental Organizations and Other Stakeholders