### **Check against delivery**



**Statement by Christina Saunders**

**Human Rights Officer, Anti-Racial Discrimination Section**

**Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**WORKSHOP ON ENHANCING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND REGIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

## Panel 2: Standards and Norms: International and regional legal framework- mechanisms for protection against racism and discrimination - cooperation between Regional and UN mechanisms, CSOs and NHRIs

21 October 2019

Geneva



Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to participate in this important workshop for the protection of human rights. Eighteen years since the World Conference against Racism in Durban (2001), the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is as important as ever. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights said in her address to the General Assembly “We are witnessing an increase in xenophobia, hate speech, pushbacks on women's equality and the rights of minorities, as well as restrictions on the civic space and widening inequalities in income, wealth, access to resources, and access to justice”.

Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental components of international human rights law and essential to the exercise and enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. However, multiple forms of discrimination persist against religious, ethnic and national minorities, persons of African descent, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrants, older persons, children, women, and LGBTI people, among others. At the same time, the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to ‘leave no one behind’ have created a momentum in favour of equality and non-discrimination- if only we can seize the opportunity.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA in 2001), the Review Conference (24 April 2009, Geneva) adopted an Outcome Document and the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action resulted in a Political Declaration (22 September 2011, New York). Together with the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and other international human rights instruments these documents provide a strong international framework to address the scourge of racism and place victims at the centre of the efforts of the international community to prevent, combat and eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We must strengthen our partnerships, focus attention on these key human rights concerns and call for urgent implementation of commitments to end racism and discrimination wherever it exists.

OHCHR is working to implement this framework and promote equality and counter discrimination through laws and institutions, and we will continue to encourage rights-based and inclusive public narratives and seek to ensure that all stakeholders adopt a human rights response to discrimination and inequality, ensuring that no one is left behind.

OHCHR Anti-Racial Discrimination Section, established in accordance with DDPA (para.191 (c)), leads the office’s work in this regard. Together with our field presences, it provides technical advice to Member States on the formulation of policies and programmes, including national plans of action to eradicate racial discrimination and promote equality and reviews anti-discrimination legislation. It also provides substantive and secretariat services for the Durban follow-up mechanisms (expert and intergovernmental mechanisms) mandated to support implementation of the outcomes of the World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The Office also supports the High Commissioner for Human Rights in her role as the Coordinator of the [International Decade for people of African descent “Recognition, Justice and Development” (2015-2024).](https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/) The Programme of Activities for the International Decade (A/RES/69/16) outlines concrete activities to be undertaken at the national, regional and international levels by Member States, including with the involvement of civil society, national human rights institutions and the UN. The main objective of the International Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. OHCHR is working to support all stakeholders to implement the programme of activities.

With regard to the Permanent Forum on people of African descent, Member States are encouraged to create an inclusive and appropriately funded mechanism that shall serve as a consultation mechanism for people of African descent.

**SG report**

The **annual Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of a global call for concrete action for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action** summarizes information received from various actors, including Member States, National Human Rights Institutions and national equality bodies, and gives an overview of activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Durban follow-up mechanisms. In this year’s report, the Secretary General notes that stronger political will and more concerted action are needed to reverse the rising trends of racist and xenophobic attitudes and violence. He emphasizes that, progress in the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance will be won only if all relevant stakeholders intensify their efforts and take relevant measures in that regard.

**Partnerships**

To strengthen its efforts to combat racial discrimination, OHCHR has been working closely with Member States, UN agencies, Regional mechanisms, National Human Rights Institutions, equality bodies and civil society.

For example, this week OHCHR are organizing the [Regional Meeting for Africa on the International Decade](https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/2019-Africa.shtml), in cooperation with the **African Union Commission**. The meeting will be hosted by the Government of Senegal in Dakar (23-24 October). The specific objectives of the regional meeting are: Enhanced knowledge and awareness, Increased engagement and commitment; Enhanced implementation linkages between the AU Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Programme of Activities of the Decade; and, Adoption of a Declaration for the region of Africa on the International Decade for People of African Descent. Thanks to the close collaboration with the AU more delegates from Governments, National Institutions and civil society have been able to participate. The meeting will have a dynamic youth participation and benefit from digital interaction and social media presence, and will incorporate historical and cultural dimensions relevant to Africa and Diaspora.

On 18 June 2019, the Secretary-General launched the [**United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech**](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf), developed by the Working Group led by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. The goal of the Strategy and the Plan of Action is to allow the UN to address hate speech in line with international human rights standards.

OHCHR and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (**ECLAC)** have been working on topics such as strengthening the sources of disaggregated data on ethnic and racial self-identification and developing indicators to measure the inequalities and gaps that exist between people of African descent and non-African descent population in Latin America and the Caribbean. A new joint publication on **indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean measuring inequalities between people of African descent and non-African descendant population in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Programme of Activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent and the Montevideo Consensus** will be launched in December 2019 in Chile.

In 2018, OHCHR welcomed the launch of the **EU Fundamental Rights Agency** landmark Survey titled “Being Black in the EU”, which reported that racism based on the colour of a person’s skin remains a pervasive scourge throughout the European Union.

OHCHR strengthened capacities of specialized **national and regional institutions** to prevent and combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. For example, during 2017-2018, three regional workshops in Addis Ababa, Almaty and Voronezh, contributed to the building of the capacities of human rights institutions and law enforcement professionals in 16 countries.

OHCHR also has a successful [**fellowship programme for people of African descent**](https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/fellowship.shtml) which has contributed to vibrant civil society networks. It provides participants with the opportunity to learn and deepen their understanding of the UN human rights system and the international framework to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates,

**Tools and suggestions for future collaboration**

Despite the grave human rights situation worldwide and challenges to our anti-discrimination work there are also many achievements, reported by States, human rights bodies, mechanisms and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, regional organizations, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations. It is hoped that these measures will serve as inspiration for other countries to effectively implement national and international legal frameworks, policies and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

I wish to draw your attention to the OHCHR [Database on practical means to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance](https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx)​ The online database is a tool which provides access to measures taken at the international, regional and national levels, including: international and regional instruments, case law from international, regional and national courts, legal measures adopted by States, as well as information on policy and institutional measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The database is regularly updated and we welcome your contributions on relevant items for inclusion.

In 2020 there will be a midterm review of implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for people of African descent and in 2021 there will be a high-level meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the DDPA. These will be important opportunities to take stock of progress and recommit to implementation. All stakeholders are invited to submit inputs for these reviews.

Finally, as an outcome of this meeting I would like to suggest that **a core group of National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms focal points be formed on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance**. The objective would be to institutionalize and strengthen the cooperation and facilitate sharing of information and expertise between OHCHR, Regional Mechanisms and National Institutions on issues of mutual concern.

Thank you.