

Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

High-level meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action: “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent”

Wednesday, 22 September 2021
United Nations General Assembly Hall
New York

Concept Note and Programme

Background

In its resolution 75/237, the General Assembly decided to hold a one-day high-level meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, at the level of Heads of State and Government, on the theme “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent”.

During the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001, Member States adopted a landmark document for combatting these scourges: the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The Declaration embodies the commitments of the international community to address the legacy of the past as well as contemporary forms and manifestations of racism and racial discrimination, including the acknowledgement that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should have always been so. The Programme of Action constitutes a comprehensive roadmap recommending how Member States and other stakeholders should implement these commitments.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is a victim-centred framework, which emphasises the plight of victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, victims of human trafficking, and persons belonging to various minorities. It reaffirms that States have the duty to protect and promote the human rights of all and should apply a gender perspective, thereby recognising the existence of multiple forms of discrimination. In particular, the Declaration and Programme of Action emphasise that people of African descent continued to be victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as a consequence of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism. The documents also acknowledged the value and diversity of the cultural heritage of Africans and people of African descent and affirmed the importance and necessity of ensuring their full integration into social, economic and political life.

The General Assembly defined the scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting in its resolution 75/320.

The General Assembly also decided to adopt a political declaration aimed at mobilizing political will at the national, regional and international levels for the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and its follow-up processes at the opening plenary meeting.

Format

The high-level meeting will take place on Wednesday, 22 September 2021, comprising of an opening plenary meeting, two consecutive roundtables and a closing plenary meeting. The roundtables will provide a platform for speakers, encompassing representatives of Members States and a broad array of stakeholders, to highlight the successes and challenges of the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, with a particular focus on people of African descent, and to discuss contemporary and emerging challenges in this area and the way forward in the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

09:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – *Opening plenary meeting*

Statements by:

- H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly during the 76th session;
- H.E. Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General;
- Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (pre-recorded statement);
- H.E. Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa (pre-recorded statement);
- H.E. Mr. Félix -Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chairperson of the African Union, on behalf of Group of African States;
- H.E. Mr. Cristian Espinosa Cañizares, Permanent representative of Ecuador to the United Nations, on behalf of Group of Latin America and Caribbean States;
- Dr. Barryl A. Biekman, Coordinator of the Monitoring Working Group on Durban Declaration and Program of Action and People of African Descent at Tiye International, and Chair of The African European Women’s Movement “Sophiedela” (pre-recorded statement);
- Youth representative, Catherine Labiran, founder, The Praxis Project.

The General Assembly will also adopt the political declaration (A/76/L.2).

11:00 a.m. – 01:00 p.m. – *Round table 1: “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent – Where do we stand 20 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action?”*

In this round table, the speakers will discuss progress made, challenges encountered and lessons-learned in efforts to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance 20 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. They will share their views on the state of play in the fight against racism, in particular through the lens of the situation of people of African descent.

Chair: Dr. Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa

Speakers: The Chair and representatives of Member States will address the General Assembly for 3 minutes each and, time permitting, participants from the stakeholder’s groups enumerated in A/Res/75/320, para.7 (c), will take the floor in the following order:

- Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);
- Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland, Chairperson of the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (pre-recorded statement);
- Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (pre-recorded statement);
- Ms. Vanessa Griddine-Jones, Esq., Executive Director, Congressional Black Caucus Political Education and Leadership Institute (pre-recorded statement).

03:00 pm – 05:00 pm. Round table 2: “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent – How to address the past to move forward?”

In this round table, the speakers will discuss how addressing past racial discrimination and considering reparations can contribute to moving the fight against racism forward. They will also speak about the relevance and pertinence of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in addressing new and emerging trends in the fight against discrimination.

Chair: H.E. Mr. Pacôme Moubelet Boubeya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic.

Speakers: The Chair and representatives of Member States will address the General Assembly for 3 minutes each and, time permitting, participants from the stakeholder’s groups enumerated in A/RES/75/320, par.7 (c), will take the floor in the following order:

- Ms. Domonique Day, Chairperson of the Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent;
- Prof. Verene Shepherd, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
- Ms. Rosa Campoalegre, member, Latin American Social Science Council (pre-recorded statement).

In addition, Prof. Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Inaugural Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Committee is invited as a keynote speaker at the Round Table Two (pre-recorded statement).

06:00 pm – 07:00 pm. Closing plenary meeting

The closing plenary meeting will comprise the presentation of summaries of the discussions by the Chairs of the round tables, followed by statements from the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and the Deputy Secretary-General.

Speakers: The interventions by the Chairs of the round tables may be delivered by the representatives of corresponding Permanent Missions and will last 8 minutes each, the closing statements will last 5 minutes each:

- Chair of Round Table One, Dr. Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa;
- Chair Round Table Two, H.E. Mr. Pacôme Moubelet Boubeya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic;
- Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, also, on behalf of Deputy Secretary-General.

End of meeting.
