



EUROPEAN UNION

Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office
and other international organisations in Geneva

27th session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

EU statement

1 December 2020

Madam Chair,

The European Union thanks the panelists for their contributions and wishes to make the following statement.

Countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance is a priority for the EU. Our union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, and is strongly committed to the fight against racism and discrimination, whether perceived or actual.

The EU action in this area builds on a solid legal framework developed over many years. With the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) there is also a strong international framework. However, the persistent spread of racism and racial discrimination in all regions of the world underlines that more must be done to ensure the implementation of the ICERD. Our joint focus should remain on the full and effective implementation of the ICERD to achieve the goal of eliminating racism in all its forms while there is no evidence that the Convention has gaps or that it fails to address contemporary forms of racism. As the recent surge in demonstrations under the slogan “Black Lives Matter” has shown, there is a strong push from all around the world for governments to take more decisive action towards fulfilling their obligations under the CERD.

The EU is actively working towards this goal. Last September, the European Commission published a new EU Anti-Racism Action Plan for the period 2020-2025. The Action Plan contains a number of far reaching measures intended to address the daily discriminations that racial and ethnic minorities experience and to change our collective attitude from a passive to an active one. It aims at bringing EU institutions, EU Member States, EU agencies, civil society organisations, social partners and the private sector together in order to address racism more effectively and come to a concerted approach.

This concerted approach is important because in order to be successful, we need to fight not only visible discrimination, but also more subtle and structural forms of racism and discrimination, and unconscious biases. Structural forms of racial discrimination are intersectional by nature. They spread in a variety of societal sectors: in the justice system and law enforcement, in the labour and housing markets, in education and healthcare, in politics and migration. This means that response measures also need to be intersectional.

Madam Chair,

With regard to the latest report of the Working Group on the matter of COVID-19, systemic racism and global protests as presented to the Human Rights Council last September, I would like to repeat that the EU agrees that States should continue to prioritize human rights, even in times of emergency.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences are having a disproportionate impact on persons in vulnerable situations and are deepening pre-existing inequalities. In this context response measures must take into account in particular the needs of those at risk of racism, racial discrimination, stigmatisation, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination.

Madam Chair,

Mutual tolerance and understanding between communities are needed more than ever. Racism is on the rise, and the EU does not take this disturbing trend lightly. We have a duty to show political leadership, prioritize dignity and equality, and apply a human rights-based approach to all our actions, both at the national and international level, and we call on other to join forces at all levels in order to build a world that is more equal, more humane and more fair.

I thank you.
