

2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

"Realizing the Dream: A UN Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent"

Statement: Racism and (i) the role of Academia, (ii) Migration, (iii) Climate Change, and (iv) Gender Injustice

Statement by:

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Madam Chair,

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Distinguished guests and comrades,

1. Representation in Knowledge Production

It is an honour and a privilege to attend this historic event. This statement is a call for this Forum to consider prioritising research that provides an account of the ongoing role of academia in perpetuating racism and discrimination. Today, the centre of academic power lies in the Northern Hemisphere. But, as research focuses on themes like decolonisation, diversity, and anti-racism, scholars of African descent often find themselves pushed to the periphery. This situation is evident wherever gatekeeping (funding, publishing, academic positions, and others), tokenisation, and other forms of narrative control exist. The status quo persists in the absence of adequate representation in knowledge production.

To that end, please prioritise, via this Forum, the wide dissemination of existing and new research that provides an overview of the ongoing role of academia in perpetuating racism and discrimination toward people of African descent. Examples include epistemic violence and the perpetuation of ideas that dehumanise people of African descent.

2. Migrants and Migration

Additionally, please consider *migration* as a topic of critical priority because the economic and political systems (mostly western developed and imposed on formerly colonised peoples)

continue to work against the wellbeing of people of African descent. Migration has emerged as an issue of critical consideration for People of African Descent. Migration has intensified “Afri(o)phobia” as Africans are in transit; and, when they arrive at their chosen destinations. While they migrate in search of new pastures (not always greener), they are exposed to risks of being dehumanised, trafficked, exploited as cheap or chattel labour, forced into sex work, etc. The ongoing Africa-Middle East “externalisation of labour” is effectively a ruse for trafficking in human persons.

3. Climate Change

Additionally, even though Africa and people of African descent have contributed insignificantly to the climate crises we are facing, they are among the worst affected and impacted by these crises. This has, in turn, seen us as the most affected or impacted by the unfair distribution of food in the world. Food insecurity is more pronounced in Black communities. Furthermore, food insecurity increases the burden on Black women, who not only must strive for an income but often become vulnerable to sexual and gender-based abuse and violence as they search for food and water on behalf of their families.

4. Gender Injustice

Women of African descent are often marginalised in the conversations that affect them. Furthermore, their input is seen to first “need” “white” acknowledgement before it is accepted/validated. This is more prevalent in Europe and North America. However, we can also point to the dehumanising impact of hiddenness and ethnic cleansing of people of African descent in parts of the Global South. There is also the impact of internalised self-hatred evidenced in the pressure towards skin lightening, hair straightening, brow extensions etc., among women of African descent and other groups.

The World Council of Churches’ (WCC) 11th Assembly (Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022) held ecumenical conversations for transformation regarding the abovementioned topics. Please see, for example, the [statement on racism](#) that emerged from WCC’s 11th Assembly.