



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related  
forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation  
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **A Declaration on Diversity**

Systemic Racism, Gender discrimination, intolerance of minorities exists because there is no Systemic concept of Diversity. There is yet to be a comprehensive declaration or convention on diversity that represents those who need their voices heard and make society comfortable with inclusivity and diversity. We at SHRG, along with over 50 other NGOs and activists globally, suggest that a significant step towards lasting peace would be the adoption of a Declaration on Diversity. This declaration will be a departure from the universalistic narrative we are all subjected to, and rather start to look at things with a more pluralistic mindset.

Existing UN Declarations that fight for diversity, while substantial, appear to be insufficient for our modern pluralistic planet. This planet is home to billions of living creatures from organisms, plants, animals, and humans, hundreds of cultures, languages, and distinct communities. Despite the Conventions and human rights norms that exist, discrimination occur primarily because people are fearful of ‘the different’ or because they wish to preserve relations of power by exclusion or exploitation. In this sense, people that come from different cultures are perceived as a threat to what is thought to be a ‘homogenous national culture’. Diversity is often perceived as a threat because homogeneity is treated as an indication of ‘normality’ while diversity is seen because of the ‘invasion’ of the different into the ‘homogenous’ whole. However, a thorough look into human history and today’s world can convince people that diversity and not homogeneity is the starting point of a dynamic process that involves a wide variety of perspectives, ways of life, individual and communal identities and economic-political circumstances that blend and change through time. If such an approach is adopted, diversity will cease to be labelled as a threat and will be approached as an opportunity for the equal and peaceful co-existence of different peoples. Moreover, society will be comfortable with and value eco-diversity. Indeed, as the existing Declarations suggest and our own brief declaration proposes, world history is the richer for this diversity.

The United Nations is exactly that, nations who are united to ensure there is peace globally and any disagreement is settled before war, yet so far too long we have seen the UN use universal language that only speaks to a post-colonial globe and not the entire diverse demographic. The UN appears unwittingly to have created an environment of hegemony as the countries holding the most power are the states in the northern hemisphere who drafted most of the institutional frameworks, rules and conventions at the UN.

The World Conference Against Racism 2001 covered several issues, including redress for historical crimes, current oppressions, and marginalisation’s. Yet there hasn’t been much progress in the many issues highlighted in the Plan of Action.

While strengthening the law and anti-discriminatory policies are essential to address discriminatory attitude towards the ‘other’ or the minority groups of the world, SHRG feel we need to go further than the law. We need to encourage a culture of accepting diversity as natural and enacting policies to help people to be comfortable with diversity and eventually feel enriched by the diversity this world offers. This in turn will complement the existing approaches.

While we recognise many countries have adopted policies of promoting diversity across the many sectors of the State, at the same time there are many countries where individuals must fight for basic respect, dignity, and equality through political campaigns and legal challenges simply to have their distinctiveness and diversity accommodated. No country has come close to curing the discriminatory pandemic. SHRG believes measures to improve and create a positive approach towards diversity are through the United Nations. We propose that a Declaration on Diversity is the appropriate step.

A Declaration on Diversity will encourage States to adopt policies, learn from best practices and reduce discrimination against minorities and underrepresented groups. This will show solidarity around the globe when we need it most, show that voices have been heard, and that no one died in vain while protesting for their human right to be treated with respect and dignity.

A Declaration on Diversity will emphasize and embody pluralism, where societies worldwide are encouraged to live in peaceful coexistence with one another, regardless of one's community, lifestyle, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, or background. We, as a world, need to do more than just tolerate one another's differences and give more than just civil rights. We need to inspire people to embrace diversity and not only feel comfortable with it but value it.

A Declaration on Diversity will also be incorporating respect for biodiversity. It will promote a better understanding of the ecosystems sustained by diversity. Respecting diversity in nature and human life compliments each other.

The UN is made up of people from all walks of life and should represent mutual coexistence between people of different backgrounds. We strongly believe a Declaration on Diversity is long overdue and will be a start to an overarching list of monumental frameworks for all countries to work from and improve on.

A Declaration on Diversity will show to the world, a world that is still hurting and feeling angry and silenced from 2020, that the UN has listened, stands in solidarity, and is making a difference. From there an annual UN Diversity Day could be introduced, celebrating the beauty of diversity within this wonderful planet, and how no longer living with hate or fear of someone different to you makes us all relaxed and comfortable with diversity. When you share companionship and empathy with people from all walks of life that does not mean you lose any of your human rights or quality of life, but rather your life will only become enriched as you admire the variety of people this world, we all share, has to offer.

We understand not all states will agree to all aspects of a Declaration on Diversity. However, we believe a glass ceiling needs to be broken, and now is the time to break it. Now should be the time of change or encouraging challenging and uncomfortable conversations to stand up for people who are still fighting for basic human rights, dignity, and respect in some states. A slow and gradual acceptance and adoption of the principal articles within such a Declaration will be a success as an initial charter for a positive action plan on fulfilling the sentiments and ambitions of the Durban Declaration.

We urge all states to consider a Declaration on Diversity as a way of making small and positive steps towards a planet that celebrates human diversity ecosystems and biodiversity.

We, SHRG propose the need for a UN Declaration on Diversity. We do not feel enough voices are being heard.

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