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

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

[6 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Addressing Racial Inequality

Racism and sexism, wielded as instruments within the far-right political, social, legal, and economic movements, have cast a shadow over the fundamental principles of human rights. Extremist ideologies, particularly those associated with the far-right, have exploited racism and sexism, drawing from a historical culture of white superiority rooted in colonialism. This alarming trend perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities and discriminations, particularly impacting Black lives, with a disproportionate burden on Black women.

The far-right's influence has permeated numerous institutions, most notably within justice and security systems globally. The consequences of this movement are far-reaching, hindering the practical implementation of the provisions set forth in the Durban Action Plan. A striking example of the repercussions of these ideologies is evident in the concerns raised by the UN Human Rights Committee following Brazil's scrutiny of compliance with the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in June 2023. The committee highlighted the persistent and excessive use of lethal force by police and security agents, disproportionately affecting young Black individuals for more than a decade.

Moreover, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has recently called for the submission of information on intersectional discrimination against Africans and people of African descent, emphasizing an intersectional approach to advancing racial justice and equality. This includes addressing multiple, intersecting manifestations of systemic racism experienced by different groups, along with actions by states and others to promote racial justice and equality in various sectors.

In this context, the Intergovernmental Working Group for the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG DDPA) emerges as a crucial entity within the United Nations human rights system. Established to monitor the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the IGWG DDPA generates reports and guidance for advocates working towards the implementation of this vital document. The progress made since the Third World Conference against Racism needs sustained efforts, with a focal point being the ongoing development of a new declaration of rights for the Black and Afro-descendant population.

Preserving the advancements achieved through the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is fundamental to the drafting of the new declaration. The political will of states, combined with the adoption of concrete and effective strategies in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances, is crucial for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the human rights of the Afro-descendant population and achieving racial equality.

States play a pivotal role in this endeavor by identifying and addressing factors hindering equal access to and equitable representation of people of African descent across the public sector, including the public service and administration of justice. Concrete measures should be implemented to remove identified obstacles, and the private sector should be encouraged to promote diversity within their organizations.

Global society demands the creation and implementation of policies ensuring a high-quality and diverse police force free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Efforts in education, including human rights education, must be intensified to promote understanding and awareness of the causes, consequences, and evils of racism. The full and active participation of youth in planning and implementing activities to combat racism is crucial. States, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and other sectors, should facilitate national and international youth dialogue on these issues.

Addressing religious intolerance, especially against African-based religions, and ensuring the free practice of beliefs is imperative. Combatting negative stereotyping, hostile acts, and violence based on religious beliefs and ethnic or racial origin is paramount for fostering a climate of tolerance and understanding.

A critical theme that the IGWG DDPA must prioritize is the economic empowerment of the Afro-descendant population, with a particular focus on Afro-descendant women. Emphasizing the need to promote the economic empowerment of this population and highlighting the role of national and international development banks in financing these efforts is essential. Urging member states to take appropriate measures, in collaboration with other entities, to utilize public and private investment, and consulting affected communities, aims to eradicate poverty, especially in areas predominantly inhabited by victims of racism.

Beyond diagnosing systematic rights violations against the Afro-descendant population, states must implement reparative measures to confront racism and sexism globally. Economic development, particularly for the Afro-descendant population, requires special attention as a key strategy.

In conclusion, the IGWG DDPA plays a pivotal role in sustaining progress against racism. The new declaration must build upon the successes of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Human Rights Council must urge Member States to commit to comprehensive strategies, ensuring equal access, diverse representation, and economic empowerment to foster a world free from racism, discrimination, and intolerance. Through collective and persistent efforts, we can pave the way for a future where human rights are universally upheld and equality prevails.
