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**RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS  
OF DISCRIMINATION: COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE DURBAN DECLARATION AND  
PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

**Possibility of the development of a racial equality index**

**Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Summary**

The present report is submitted in accordance with the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/88. It focuses on activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the possibility of the development of a racial equality index.

## **Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/88, in paragraph 13 of which the Commission requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to examine the possibility of the development of a racial equality index, as proposed by the group of independent eminent experts.

2. The first meeting of the independent eminent experts appointed by the Secretary-General took place in Geneva from 16 to 18 September 2003. In its views transmitted to the Commission on Human Rights, the experts “recommended that the international community find ways of measuring existing racial inequalities, possibly through the development of a ‘Racial Equality Index’, similar to the Human Development Index developed and used by the United Nations Development Programme” (E/CN.4/2004/112, para. 6 (f)). The General Assembly, in its resolution 58/160, reiterated the request to the High Commissioner.

3. In its deliberations at the second session, held in Geneva from 26 January to 6 February 2004, the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG) recalled the need for disaggregated data by race and gender, notably in order to provide States with the full picture of racial discrimination, bearing in mind the fact that a number of United Nations treaty bodies already requested States to provide detailed statistics in their reporting procedure.

4. The third session of the IGWG (Geneva, 11-22 October 2004) and the fourth session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (Geneva, 25 October-5 November 2004) provided opportunities to gather information to determine the framework within which a racial equality index could possibly be defined.

5. It may be noted that the collection of disaggregated data could effectively be envisaged where States already have a national classification system in place. At present, there is no international classification system for “races” or ethnic groups. Notions such as “tribe”, “ethnic minority”, “race” or “indigenous peoples” have distinct and different meanings in different countries. That is why international organizations rely on the national data produced by national statistical institutes, based on national racial/ethnic classification systems. This does not easily allow for comparisons between countries, but does permit monitoring changes over time as well as the direction and speed of such changes at the national level. The issue is very complex and we must proceed step by step with prior, thorough consultations with competent partners within and outside the United Nations before engaging in the process of elaborating an actual project proposal.

### **Action undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

6. To respond effectively to the request made by the Commission, OHCHR has undertaken preliminary research on the problems of discrimination in general and racial discrimination in particular, with a focus on data collection. In the process, it has gathered information on socio-economic indicators, justice and criminality, as well as disaggregated data by race/colour/ethnic origin, from specialized agencies, United Nations bodies and academic

institutions. It appears from the research conducted that the indicators used vary from country to country, and that it is essential for any data collected to cover all groups suffering from racial discrimination, including indigenous and tribal people.

7. Consultations were initiated within OHCHR in order to determine the conceptual and empirical elements that should be taken into account in the context of this study.

8. The conceptual elements include:

(a) Analysis of the normative framework for discrimination issues in general and racial discrimination in particular (e.g. treaties, general comments, general recommendations, guidelines for States parties' reporting), with a view to elaborating operational tools for statistical analysis;

(b) Review of current forms of racial discrimination, considering both developing and developed countries;

(c) Review and evaluation of the conceptual framework and methodology used in the Human Development Index (HDI) and examination of their suitability to developing an index on racial discrimination;

(d) Survey of main initiatives that have developed indices for assessing racial and other types of discrimination, including gender discrimination, examining in particular their conceptual basis and assumptions with a view to adopting a workable methodology.

9. The empirical elements include:

(a) Analysis of the possibility of developing an index that would encompass all relevant issues including operational definitions, statistical methodology, national capacities in data collection, disaggregation and dissemination (notably, national statistical law; United Nations principles for official statistics);

(b) Survey of other related initiatives, including the National Human Development Reports.

10. Preliminary discussions have also taken place on the question of creating a racial equality index with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has some experience in this field, both in terms of methodology and in the framing of country reports regarding the question of racial discrimination based on aggregate data.

11. In 2005 OHCHR will pursue discussions with the Human Development Report Office in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose main responsibility is to create indices, in order to determine the advisability of conducting a study on the creation of a racial equality index. After this phase OHCHR plans to convene an extended consultation with all its key partners, notably, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, UNESCO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Human

Settlements Programme UN-Habitat, to review the product of its prior research and make a determination as to whether the project should be undertaken. An international consultant will be recruited if necessary.

### **Conclusion**

**12. A racial equality index appears to be a potentially important tool for substantive research in terms of identifying causes and manifestations of racial discrimination in a society. However, its complexity requires serious consideration of its usefulness for policy-planners and decision makers, in the context of measuring performance in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Hence the need to ensure that expertise is tapped wherever it can be found, both within and outside the United Nations system. It is necessary to establish the methodological soundness of such a tool if the outcome of the exercise is to be credible. The Commission may wish to continue its consideration of this matter at its present session.**

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