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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Agenda item 72 (*continued*)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

The President: Today's meeting has been convened to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and hold a debate on the mitigation and countering of rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies, in accordance with paragraph 27 of resolution 73/262, adopted on 22 December 2018.

Statement by the President

The President: Words are powerful. Words can kill. "You are subhuman; you are rats; you are cockroaches to be exterminated"—those words framed some of the worst crimes in human history: slavery, the decimation of indigenous peoples, the Holocaust and apartheid.

The murder of 69 peaceful protesters in Sharpeville, South Africa, on 21 March 1960 moved the General Assembly to establish the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination came into force a few years later. It is now 50 years old. The Convention has supported the fight against racism at the country level

and internationally. While we now have more laws and tools to combat discrimination, we have not managed to keep our promise of "never again".

Racist ideologies helped fuel the genocide in Rwanda, the Srebrenica massacre and other atrocities committed since. Those crimes shame us all. They represent the worst of humankind. But they are not accidents; they are part of a continuum of racism that begins with small things — stereotyping, suspicious looks and questions like "Where are you really from?" Such micro-aggressions may not always lead to human rights abuses, but they can create the conditions for violations.

The General Assembly decided last year that this meeting should focus on countering nationalist populism and supremacist ideologies. The Special Rapporteur on racism has reported on the rise of racist propaganda in all regions. The Special Rapporteur on religious freedom has documented an alarming surge in attacks on Jews and Muslims, as well as on Christians, Hindus and other religious communities.

As the High Commissioner for Human Rights recently noted, populists rely on demonizing the other. Across the world, populists are exploiting the legitimate grievances of those who feel left behind. We must intensify efforts to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for all people everywhere, but we must not legitimize hate speech. We must push back against those who blame our problems on migrants. We must ensure that short-sighted nationalism does not derail global solutions. The challenges we face require global

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cooperation like never before. No country can address issues such as climate change alone. Multilateralism makes us stronger, not weaker. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a framework all Governments can use to respond to the needs and aspirations of their citizens.

Racism has always co-opted the discourse of the day — from the pseudo-religious justification for colonial oppression to the pseudo-scientific Nazi doctrines of racial superiority. Today, the language of human rights is being co-opted. The freedom of expression is used as an excuse to disseminate hate. The freedom of expression is a fundamental human right. It is a powerful tool for fighting racism — but trolling does not support freedom of expression, it stifles it. Hate speech is not free speech, it is racism.

Words can kill, but they can also save lives. I commend the Prime Minister of New Zealand for speaking out against hate speech in the wake of the terrorist attack in Christchurch. I also commend the Secretary-General's plans to create a system-wide strategy on hate speech. Finally, I commend the Assembly for affirming its commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action last year.

Later today we will commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. As we enter the fourth year of the International Decade for People of African Descent, we must do more to address the impact of our past on people and institutions today. For example, African and the Caribbean are underrepresented in international institutions. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations could be an opportunity to address that.

My heroes have spoken in this Hall, including Nelson Mandela, whose centenary we marked last year. But I want to end by quoting a fictional superhero, T'Challa, who spoke these words in the movie *Black Panther*:

“Now more than ever, the illusions of divisions threaten our very existence. We all know the truth — more connects us than separates us ... We must find a way to look after one another as if we were one simple tribe.”

I now have the privilege to invite His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres to make a statement.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to join those gathered in this Hall to observe the International Day

for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This is an occasion for all of us to renew our promise to end racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including social and ethnic discrimination, anti-Muslim hatred and anti-Semitism.

The massacre at two mosques in New Zealand two Fridays ago is the latest tragedy rooted in such poison. Last Friday, I visited the Islamic Cultural Center of New York to show my solidarity and express my outrage. Today and every day, we must stand united against racial and religious hatred and the terrorism of bigots. No country or community is immune.

I am deeply alarmed by the current rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance, increasingly fed by nationalist and populist ideologies. Hate speech is entering the mainstream, spreading like wildfire through social media and radio. And we are seeing it spread in liberal democracies and authoritarian States alike. Those dark forces threaten democratic values, social stability and peace. They stigmatize women, minorities, migrants and refugees. And when people are attacked physically, verbally or in social media because of their race, religion or ethnicity, all of society is diminished. It is crucial for all of us to join hands, stand up and defend the principles of equality and human dignity.

With that in mind, I asked Adama Dieng, my Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, to bring together the United Nations system to design a strategy and plan of action to combat hate speech. We must work harder to repair the fissures and polarization that are so prevalent in our societies today. We must nurture mutual understanding and invest in making diversity a success. And we must counter and reject political figures who exploit differences for electoral gain.

But we must also ask why so many people feel excluded and are tempted by messages of intolerance against others. We need to engage everyone in dismantling the harmful and specious notions of racial superiority. Even today, after the pseudo-science of the Nazis contributed to the Holocaust, the world is seeing the persistence — and even a surge — of neo-Nazi thinking and white supremacy. We must bury such lies once and for all. We must uphold and promote universal human rights at the heart of our efforts. That includes supporting national legislation that promotes non-discrimination and encouraging politicians and

religious leaders to speak out against intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping and hate speech.

Let us all resolve today to fight racism and discrimination, in remembrance of those who have died standing up for their own and others' human rights. Let us reflect on how we can all promote non-discrimination in every country and at every level. A few days after the atrocity in New Zealand, worshippers attending a mosque in England were surprised to see a white man standing by the door holding a placard. It said: "You are my friends. I will keep watch while you pray."

Such solidarity is always in evidence after a tragedy. We saw it in Christchurch, where the community came out in an outpouring of grief to lay flowers and perform the traditional New Zealand haka. And we saw it last year in Pittsburgh, after the worst anti-Semitic terrorist attack in the United States, when members of the Muslim community voiced their support and raised money for the victims. The Executive Director of the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh said:

"We just want to know what you need — if it is people outside your next service protecting you, let us know. We will be there."

Let us use these bonds proactively to prevent violence and defend the lives and values we hold dear. We are all connected by our humanity. We are all equal. We should all be looking out for each other's welfare.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, I should like to consult members with a view to inviting the following speakers to make statements, in accordance with paragraph 27 of resolution 73/262 and as mentioned in my letter dated 15 March 2019: Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights; Mr. Amir Noureddine, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and Ms. Tendayi Achime, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite those speakers to make statements at this meeting?

It was so decided (decision 73/550).

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Ms. Gilmore (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights): It is my honour to convey to the General Assembly the warmest greetings of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A national President once stood at this rostrum to urge from the Assembly a more consequential understanding:

"that until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, until there are no longer any first-class and second-class citizens of any nation, until the colour of a man's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes, until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all, without regard to race ... until bigotry and prejudice and malicious and inhuman self-interest have been replaced by understanding, tolerance and goodwill ... until that day, the dream of lasting peace ... " — and no doubt today he would add 'and sustainable development' — will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained." (*A/PV.1229, para. 27*)

Inclusive equality's normative and legal framework, thanks to the early advocacy of such Member States as Jamaica, Ghana and Liberia, has been established for many decades now. However, millions still pay the cruel cost and casualty of race-based discrimination — of that maximum hatred for minimum reason, including xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, which deals in intricate, toxic confinements of human opportunity, capability and contribution; narrows, distorts and scars human potential; and offers false justifications for the unjust distribution of power, possibility and influence.

Because of racism's callous and complex intersections with poverty, age, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race-based contempt and the inequalities it fosters are all the more pernicious for women of African descent; for indigenous people defending their land rights against rapacious developers; for those who, in flight from conflict and crisis, seek exercise of their right to asylum; and for human rights

defenders who, at risk even to their lives, bravely stand up against hatefulness.

Racism is a clear and present drain and drag on the equal participation and involvement of all people in their sustainable development, leading instead to grievance, violence and conflict and eating away at our mutual prosperity. Today's populists, by peddling that worn contempt anew, reinforce — as history warns us — the gravest impediments to the purposes of the Organization and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We may well call for greater efficiency and effectiveness in the operations of our systems and the investments of our resources, but in an era of austerity and frugality when our planet is struggling against the scarcity of resources, how can we further tolerate, even for a moment, any more of racism's reckless waste of our most precious resource — the talent, capability, contribution and courage of all people? No matter how inconvenient the demands of equality are to those who benefit so much from its refusal, in the necessary quest for human rights for all there is no East or West and no North or South — there is only the inhumane and the humane.

I do not have to be liked for my rights to be respected. I do not have to look like someone else to uphold their rights. We do not have to agree with each other to defend each other's rights. Rights are not a beauty parade or a reward system. They are for the best and the worst of us, for each and every one of us, with the exception of none of us, for the inclusion of each of us, in the interests of all us.

The American activist artist Billie Holiday — a woman of African descent — sang out with her poet's voice against the horror that is racism:

“Southern trees bear strange fruit / Blood on the leaves and blood at the root / Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze / Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees”.

In a world that is often home to spite, hate and bigotry in the name of a person's skin, identity or faith, strange fruit grows again on populist trees — imprisonment of minority journalists, arbitrary detention of political dissidents, assassinations of indigenous environmentalists, slaughter of people at worship, rejection at our borders of refugees in flight, bullying

of our children for their identity and indiscriminate rounding up of people simply for who they are.

Such cruelties cannot leave the Assembly untroubled. This is not the “uniform nations” but must be the United Nations — nations united by the Charter's founding affirmation, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that we are all born free and equal in dignity and rights, and also nations united against the forces that would erode that affirmation, for which there is no conscionable alternative.

Over half a century ago, Hailie Selassie, whom I quoted earlier, closed his remarks to the General Assembly with these words:

“We must become bigger than we have ever been: more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook. We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our ultimate allegiance not to nations but to our fellow men within the human community.”(*ibid.*, para. 38)

On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and on the many such Days to come, may these United Nations truly stand out as the Organization that stands up for the purpose for which it was created — human rights for all.

The President: I thank Ms. Gilmore for her briefing.

In accordance with the decision taken, I now give the floor to Mr. Amir Noureddine, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Mr. Noureddine (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I would like to thank you, Madam President, for the invitation to take the floor and congratulate you on the theme you chose to commemorate this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — “Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies”. That concern is a fundamental challenge to the future of our societies and the state of the international community.

When the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was drawn up, the prevailing idea was to prevent and combat some of the root causes that had led to the horrors of the Second World War, which we are all aware of, in particular the nationalist populism and

authoritarian ideologies that were based on the spread of ideas of racial superiority and of the superiority of some civilizations and cultures.

While those ideas are not new, we cannot deny that they are resurfacing more than ever today, and with greater strength. No region of the world is spared, as I am sure members are aware. Indeed, 70 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and almost 65 years after the adoption of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, we are once again witnessing a resurgence in the ideologies and behaviours that threaten the values on which our nations have founded their mutual commitment and cooperation.

In order to address the problem of nationalist populism, which brings about war, sows the seeds of exclusion and creates a climate of varying degrees of hostility among peoples and communities, and also to prevent and deconstruct extreme supremacist ideologies, which are based on ideas of racial superiority that still exist today, the negotiators of the International Convention on Racial Discrimination included a mandatory preventive provision that was immediately applicable.

I refer to article 4 of the Convention, which condemns all propaganda and all organizations that are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form. Similarly, article 4 criminalizes any dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred and any incitement to racial discrimination, as well as the provision of assistance to racist activities. It also obliges States to declare illegal and prohibit organizations and activities that incite racial discrimination and to criminalize participation in such organizations or activities.

Allow me to make special mention of racial hatred and refer to a recommendation adopted by our Committee that emphasizes the consequences of what I consider a crime against humanity and that generally leads to crises, conflicts and wars within and between nations. Indeed, racial hatred is one of the primary concerns of our Committee on the occasion of the commemoration of this Day, which marks the international community's ongoing struggle to mitigate and counter rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies.

Our Committee is not only a body that oversees the implementation of the Convention, it is also a forum for monitoring discriminatory behaviour, which allows the Committee to sound the alarm on racial discrimination phenomena that emerge, evolve or reappear. What have we seen in recent years?

First, nationalist populism has been buoyed by the racist discourse transmitted by politicians and public figures with ad hoc governmental authority, often for political expediency but also for the stated purpose of defending the exclusive interests and rights of a particular national or ethnic group, which involves the risk of a retreat into separatism and can fuel racial hatred.

Secondly, the number of organizations allegedly involved in the defence of identity-related interests has increased. They openly preach the superiority of certain ethnic, racial or national groups over others, fuel and incite racial hatred, including racist violence, and even openly engage in militaristic parades and acts of racist violence. The events of recent days and months both serve as condemnation and put us to the test.

Such increasingly blatant behaviour, under the guise of freedom of expression, thought and association, too often goes unpunished. A number of States, for a range of reasons, lack appropriate legislation to fight the problem effectively.

Nationalist populism and supremacist ideologies based on notions of racial superiority are not simply examples of people exercising their freedom of expression, thought or association; nor are they simply the actions of certain ethnic or national groups, supposedly under threat from others, to preserve their cultural heritage or defend their economic interests; nor, still, do they represent ordinary political dynamics. They are, moreover, tools for sowing division within our increasingly pluralistic and multi-ethnic societies, and thereby threatening their social cohesion. We must therefore guard against them and the rising tide of xenophobia and intolerance, fuelling the rejection of those different from ourselves.

But who are the victims here? Our Committee has observed that the victims are national or ethnic minorities, including Roma, Jews and people of African descent; indigenous peoples; migrants, whether regular or irregular; refugees, asylum seekers and persons internally displaced within their own countries. Our Committee deems that these categories,

the most vulnerable, require and demand of us more vigilant protection.

What are the solutions to fighting against and containing these phenomena? The work of our Committee has always been to call on States parties to engage in efforts on two fronts to prevent and to counter these problems.

When it comes to prevention, education remains without a doubt the central tool and mechanism we must all continue to focus on. Teaching all types and levels must not only impart human rights ideals, but also promote tolerance, coexistence and knowledge about those different from ourselves, as well as the acceptance of diversity with a view to fighting and deconstructing the sort of racial prejudices that lead to racial discrimination or racism, and thereby to promoting respect, equality and justice for all. Education should encompass the systematic building of awareness among populations about such values as tolerance and harmonious coexistence with a view to forging self-sustaining mutual trust among the different ethnic or national groups and communities living on the same territories within States. While this is the very purpose of article 7 of our Convention, our Committee has unfortunately noted that such efforts do not always hit the mark or remain insufficient. I therefore call on States to step up such efforts.

Turning now to the perspective of countering these problems, States parties have undertaken an obligation to take legislative measures, including through criminal law, to combat different forms of racial discrimination and racism and, consequently, to investigate such acts and prosecute their perpetrators, especially in cases of incitement to racist violence or the dissemination of notions of racial superiority.

However, in that regard as well, we are falling short. Unfortunately, States parties have not yet been bold enough in their reactions, which risks creating a culture of impunity for acts of racial hatred or the spreading of nationalist populist ideologies. Such permissive conduct, whether explicit or implicit, or lack of vigilance on the part of States will only allow things to get worse. I therefore call once again on States to adopt and strictly enforce the necessary laws to prevent and combat these phenomena.

Moreover, combating nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies based on notions of racial or ethno-religious superiority requires greater

awareness and accountability on the part of the media and those responsible for it. Their role as vehicles for the dissemination of speech remains essential; it is therefore imperative that they understand the crucial things at stake in the fight against racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

Moreover, the climate prevailing in our societies today demands strengthened protection for the rights of minority ethnic and national groups. In that regard, I call once again on States to ensure that under no circumstances will the rights of minorities be eroded or compromised, and that such minorities can participate fully in the political, social, economic and cultural dimensions of public life in the countries where they live.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my recommendation that States and all other actors show greater vigilance: only by doing so can we halt the rise and spread of nationalist populism and ideologies based on racial superiority, and, between now and 2030 through the Sustainable Development Goals, overcome the global challenges we all face to achieve a better future for all that is free of discrimination of any kind and leaves no one behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Ms. Achiume (Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance): I thank you, Madam President, for setting the tone so powerfully for this plenary meeting. It is a privilege to address the General Assembly in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, but I do so with a heavy heart.

This is my third address to the General Assembly. At my first address (see A/72/PV.79), also on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I joined the many who mourned the death but celebrated the life of Afro-Brazilian anti-racism activist Marielle Franco, shortly after her gruesome assassination. My second address was for the purpose of presenting my thematic report (A/73/305), which mapped the many different ways resurgent ethno-nationalist populism today undermines racial equality globally.

I presented that report in October 2018, a few days after the horrendous anti-Semitic shooting of Jewish worshippers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. And as we commemorate the International Day Against Racism this year, we do so in the shadow of the recent Islamophobic shooting of Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand.

In proclaiming the first International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the General Assembly called in resolution 2142 (XXI) on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. More than 50 years later, the United Nations and its Member States remain far from achieving that goal. The resurgence of ethno-nationalist populism and extremist supremacist ideologies, and the dead bodies that lie in the wake of this resurgence, make clear that greater urgency is required within the United Nations and among Member States to tackle racial discrimination, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

What are the dangers of ethno-nationalist populism and ideologies of racial or ethnic supremacy? As I mentioned, I submitted a report on this very topic to the General Assembly in 2018, and it is my sincere hope that Member States will draw on that report and the many other reports and recommendations from within the United Nations human rights system on what is required to achieve racial equality and combat discrimination and intolerance, including in the face of extremist supremacist ideologies.

Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, reminds us that racism kills. It kills in the direct forms I have mentioned — mass killings motivated by supremacist ideologies. But racism and xenophobia also kill, maim, degrade, marginalize and do other terrible things through institutions and structures, and this broader context similarly warrants attention.

The very date of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March, recalls the horror of racial violence embedded in formal legal and policy structures. This date marks the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa — a date marred by brutal police violence and the murder of individuals protesting apartheid pass laws.

Today ethno-nationalist populism's demonization of those marked as "foreign" has emboldened many States to carry out racially discriminatory practices,

including the discriminatory revocation or denial of citizenship; arbitrary detention or expulsion of immigrant communities; and wanton violation of principles of non-refoulement. And where political victories have accompanied populist demonization of racial, religious, indigenous or ethnic groups, these groups are now the renewed targets of brazen hate crimes and hate speech.

Ethno-nationalist politics do more than sustain violence and hate speech. In my report, I document how these politics also sustain structural exclusion through voter suppression aimed at racial, ethnic and other minorities; constitutional and legislative amendments to exclude certain groups from political life on racial, ethnic, religious or other grounds; and undemocratic restrictions of civic space. Ethno-nationalist populist politics also typically operate to undermine the rights of women, of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons, and of persons with disabilities.

The International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination entered into force in 1969, 50 years ago. As the States Members of the United Nations wrestle with the state of the world — a world over which they have ultimate control — that Convention remains a powerful resource for them, providing a legal and institutional framework for the difficult work that is their responsibility. The Convention makes clear that the elimination of racial discrimination requires more than merely treating the symptoms of racial discrimination; rather, it requires States to address the underlying, embedded, systemic causes of this discrimination.

Yet many States seem to have taken the opposite approach — some denying that racial discrimination exists within their country, others going so far as to remove the word "race" from domestic anti-discrimination law, while structures of racial subordination remain undisturbed. The truth is that they, the States Members of the United Nations, are not doing enough to take seriously the breadth and depth of global systems of racial and ethnic discrimination and intolerance.

To take seriously the obligation to eliminate racial discrimination, States must take action against supremacist ideologies; account for historical and ongoing projects of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, all of which are rooted in supremacist ideologies; and show commitment to ending subjugation on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion or any other

related category. Political leaders should foreground the substantive equality of all individuals in their politics and rhetoric, and educational systems should uphold obligations to combat prejudice and promote understanding among all peoples.

As Prime Minister Arden of New Zealand is demonstrating in response to the attack in her country, it is possible to respond to terror and hatred by seeking strength in solidarity and unity, rather than in divisive discourses at odds with human rights. Member States must confront the truth that expedient politics of exclusion are incompatible with a just domestic order, and, furthermore, such politics can destroy the very foundations of domestic order.

Celebrations such as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination are meaningless unless accompanied by the urgent, systemic and sustained action truly required to ensure that race, ethnicity, national origin or any related social category is no longer the reason that some die while others live. While talking is necessary, what the world requires even more urgently is serious action.

For those on the front lines of racial violence, racial terror, structural discrimination and structural exclusion, every day has to be a day against racism if they are to survive. This struggle is not one shared by all. There are many in the world and in this Hall who have the privilege, on account of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or class, of only thinking or worrying about discrimination and intolerance when they see it covered in the news or reported by others. Yet defeating racial discrimination and intolerance cannot and should not be a fight waged exclusively, or even primarily by, those subject to discrimination, intolerance and exclusion. Every single person, especially those who enjoy racial, ethnic, religious, gender or class privilege on a daily basis, must play her part to put an end to the racism, xenophobia and related intolerance that prevail today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Muhammad Bande (Nigeria): I should like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under the theme “Mitigation and countering of rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies”.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remains the most comprehensive, action-oriented global framework to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It condemns the persistence and resurgence of neo-Nazism, neo-fascism and violent nationalist ideologies based on racial or national prejudice, and states that such phenomena can never be justified in any circumstances.

The Group of African States is concerned that racist extremist movements based on ideologies that seek to promote populist, nationalist agendas are spreading in various parts of the world. The Group is convinced that any doctrine of racial superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and must be rejected, together with theories that attempt to determine the existence of separate human races. Nationalist populism that advances exclusionary or repressive practices and policies that harm individuals or groups on the basis of their race, ethnicity, national origin and religion, or other related social categories should be condemned.

Reliable media is one critical pillar in the achievement of democracy, the rule of law and good governance. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recognizes the positive contribution that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression by the media and through other new information technologies, including the Internet, and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can make to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Furthermore, it reiterates the need to respect the editorial independence and autonomy of the media in this respect. There is therefore a need to promote the use of new information and communication technologies, including the Internet, to contribute to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Group calls on States to uphold their obligations under human rights law to counter such extreme ideologies online and underscores the responsibilities of technology companies in the light of human rights principles.

The Group of African States also calls on the international community and the United Nations family to support the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010. The African Group reiterates the need to do justice by the victims of rights violations resulting from racism, racial

discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in the light of their vulnerabilities.

The Group welcomes the decision of the United Nations to establish a permanent forum on people of African descent, which will serve as a consultation mechanism and platform for people of African descent and other interested stakeholders with regard to improving the quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent and contribute to the development of a United Nations declaration in that regard. That is the first step towards a legally binding instrument on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, including migrants and refugees, who are often the target of extremist racist movements based on ideologies seeking to promote populist nationalist agendas.

The Group reiterates that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of societies.

The Group is further concerned at the removal, since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, of the historic 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance from among the 20 major achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In that connection, the Group requests the Secretary-General and the Office of the High Commissioner to provide the resources necessary for the effective fulfilment of the mandates of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards. That should ensure the participation of experts in each session of those follow-up mechanisms in order to provide advice on the specific issues under discussion and assist the mechanisms in their deliberations and the adoption of the action-oriented recommendations in relation to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

In conclusion, the African Group affirms its commitment to fighting against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on

any basis. Slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, apartheid and colonialism, must never be forgotten. In that regard, the Group applauds the United Nations, through the former Department of Public Information, and the international community for honouring the memory of victims by establishing the permanent memorial at United Nations Headquarters commemorating 200 years since the abolition of transatlantic slave trade and slavery, and ongoing educational, promotional and outreach activities through a range of media.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tonga, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Tōnē (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Group Asia-Pacific States as its Chair for the month of March.

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this special meeting to commemorate this important day, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and focusing on the important issue of mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies, as per resolution 73/262. Given the senseless loss of innocent lives less than two weeks ago, on Friday 15 March, in Christchurch, New Zealand, in our Asia-Pacific region, the theme is particularly apt and timely.

It is alarming to see that, in many parts of the world, there are Islamophobic, xenophobic and extremist movements based on ideologies that seek to promote populist, nationalist and racial supremacist positions. What is more alarming is that such positions are given some measure of legitimacy by Governments. The terror attacks in Christchurch, which claimed 50 lives, portrayed the scourges of racism and racial discrimination as well as extreme supremacist ideologies. The Asia-Pacific region is made up of 57 Member States from different parts of the globe and with broad diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, religion and culture. The recent attack in Christchurch serves to underscore the fact that no region of the world is immune from rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies. We must continue to promote tolerance, inclusion, unity and respect for diversity in the context of combating racial discrimination. We must “*kia kaha*” — that is, to say, “stay strong”.

We reaffirm our commitment to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remain a solid basis and the only instructive outcome of the World Conference, prescribing comprehensive measures for combating racism and providing adequate remedies for victims.

We recognize and affirm that the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a matter of priority for the international community. The eyes of the world, in particular the innocent victims of senseless violence and discrimination based on race, are today upon us once again. We therefore celebrate this Day not only to mark our success in our common approach towards eliminating racial discrimination from among us but also to reaffirm our concern and our ongoing efforts at mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies.

On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, we again declare and reiterate our strong commitment and unwavering determination to ensure that countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies remains a high priority for the States members of our Group and for the entire world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mrs. Pejanović Đurišić (Montenegro): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States. I wish to thank you, Madam President, for maintaining the focus on this important topic on the United Nations agenda.

Racism not only constitutes a serious violation of the human rights of individuals, it also undermines our societies by spreading fear and animosity between communities around the world. Raising awareness of the suffering of victims of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia is of the utmost importance if we want to close the chapter of our history containing racial discrimination and intolerance.

Today we come together to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which commemorates the massacre of peaceful protesters demonstrating against apartheid in Sharpeville, South Africa. It is also an opportunity to

reaffirm our political will and commitment to putting an end to racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations and to ensuring respect for human rights and freedom worldwide.

The principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion is enshrined in the basic documents of our Organization — the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remain important guidelines for international, regional and national actions against racism. Ratifying and fully implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination should be a priority for all countries.

Although we have made significant progress in the global fight against racism in recent decades, we are still startled by manifestations of racial discrimination and the alarming rise of xenophobia and intolerance across societies. The resurgence of discriminatory attitudes and practices, along with the rise of far-right political parties and movements, is a warning signal and requires our keen attention and determined action.

There is an eminent need for greater resolve and leadership in addressing all forms and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all spheres of life and in all parts of the world.

If we want to create a safer, more equal and more respectful world based on international law, it is essential that we prevent extremist ideologies from becoming acceptable in our societies. Therefore, we must spare no effort in tirelessly exposing the dangers of racist attitudes and their disastrous consequences, in countering intolerance and discrimination, and in promoting tolerance, inclusion and respect for diversity within our nations and among all communities.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of San Marino, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Beleffi (San Marino): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was the first

United Nations human rights instrument, adopted in 1965. Since its adoption, the Convention has served as a unique United Nations human rights treaty dedicated to eradicating racial discrimination. The Convention is an almost universally ratified instrument, and its Committee plays a fundamental role in monitoring and assisting States in implementing and developing policies to combat and eliminate racial discrimination.

We have achieved great results since the adoption of the Convention. However, despite the progress, the elimination of racial discrimination remains a major challenge today. Many people have been and continue to be excluded, killed or denied their rights because of the fear, greed and hatred of other groups that consider themselves to be superior. Wars, genocide and other atrocities have been committed because of a lack of trust and understanding and an unwillingness to bridge our differences.

Regarding this year's theme, I would like to underline that it is crucial to counter the rising national extremist and uproot extreme supremacist ideologies that fuel racism, racial discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia. Any doctrine of racial superiority is wrong and, as such, should be rejected and condemned. Such doctrines promote marginalization, exclusion and repressive practices that harm individuals on the basis of their race, ethnicity or national origin and, as such, pose a serious threat to the fundamental principles of human rights of non-discrimination and equality.

Recently, we have regrettably witnessed an escalation of incidents and crimes related to racist and xenophobic factors, as well as an increase in intolerant and hateful messages that have spread quickly and easily, including through the misuse of new technologies and social platforms.

Today, we would like to recall the suffering of the victims of racism — those of the past and those who are experiencing it today in many regions of the world. We would like to extend our condolences to all those affected by the recent terrorist attack in New Zealand. We strongly condemn that attack; it must strengthen our resolve to combat hatred.

We also firmly condemn the persistent forms of racism and racial discrimination and we stress the need to promote understanding, tolerance, inclusion, cooperation and respect for diversity. In that regard, it is crucial that States fully implement their obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Eliminating racial discrimination and inequality is a challenge facing all States alike, and one that we can all work together to overcome.

I would also like to stress the role of education in addressing the proliferation of racist and discriminatory discourse and in fostering intercultural exchanges to raise awareness and promote understanding and respect for others. I also want to commend the work of human rights defenders in tackling the spread of racial discrimination and recall the risks they encounter in doing so. In addition, I would like to highlight the importance of civil society, especially for its monitoring role in detecting acts of racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination manifests itself in different ways, from denying individuals the basic principle of equality to fuelling ethnic hatred that may lead to genocide. For this reason, we must remain constantly alert, and the fight against racial discrimination must remain a priority.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all human beings. Together with the United Nations system, we are committed to eradicating discrimination and eliminating the conditions that cause or help perpetrate racial discrimination.

Today, we live in a world of great diversity where understanding and respect represent the only possible way forward if we genuinely wish to build a peaceful and inclusive society and avoid the mistakes of the past.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I am honoured to join everyone here today in marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and I thank you, Madam President, for convening this crucial conversation.

The United States is firmly committed to combating racism and racial discrimination. For us, that commitment is rooted in the saddest chapters of our own history and reflected in our nation's most cherished aspirations. We have come a long way, but fighting racism remains an ongoing challenge.

Today, we recommit to working with civil society, international mechanisms and all nations of goodwill

to combat racism and racial discrimination at home and abroad and to defend equality and human dignity wherever they are threatened. We will continue our robust implementation of our obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and our support for the activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

The United States is deeply concerned about speech that advocates national, racial or religious hatred, particularly when it constitutes incitement to violence, discrimination or hostility. We are confident that the best antidote to offensive speech is strong legal protections against racial discrimination, the prosecution of hate crimes and proactive Government outreach to racial and religious communities. At the same time, we support the vigorous protection of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. To bring an end to the scourge of racial discrimination, the members of the General Assembly should work together to ensure that such efforts are reinforced and expanded.

The United States is deeply concerned about the practices of some States that target minority communities with brutal violence, forced labour, arbitrary surveillance, gross violations of privacy and mass detention in internment camps solely on the basis of their race, ethnicity or religion. A diversity of background and belief should be embraced and celebrated, and a deep respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people must be central to our efforts to eliminate racial discrimination. History tells us that such an approach promotes not only tolerance and inclusivity but also economic prosperity, sustainable development and peaceful coexistence.

Mr. Mutua (Kenya): Today's theme, on the background of recent attacks related to intolerance, calls for clear and comprehensive international action to curb this scourge. Today's commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reminds us of the dark days of colonialism, which were shrouded in mass racial classification and degradation, including instances of the wanton deaths of unarmed protesters, killed under discriminatory and racist laws. In Kenya, that was evident in discrimination in living quarters, schools, churches, social places and intermittent hate speech.

It is glaringly clear that we are living in an increasingly intolerant and divided society where racist,

extremist movements based on ideologies seeking to promote populist nationalist agendas are spreading in various parts of the world, fuelling racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. People are targeted because of their race, nationality, ethnicity or religion. Against that backdrop, migrants face persecution, and women and girls of minority communities are the targets of xenophobic stereotyping and stigmatization. This includes instances of minority communities experiencing racial profiling at the hands of authorities.

The General Assembly has reiterated in its resolutions on eliminating racism that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of societies. It follows, therefore, that those resolutions affirm that any doctrine of racial superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and must be rejected, together with theories that attempt to assert differences within the human race.

In the guise of nationalist populism, racism is equally expressed by a handful of leaders who paint their followers as victims of less representative key groups, and through entrenched fears about the perceived destruction of national cultures and values amid unprecedented and rapid rates of immigration and ethnic change, anxieties related to deprivation and losses of jobs or incomes, along with a strong fear of being left behind in society. Despite this scenario, however, millions are speaking out against racism and intolerance, with myriad communities opening up to refugees and migrants, recognizing and appreciating migration as part of the solution to our global problems, as embodied in the recently adopted Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) as a reminder of our common obligations.

I call on the international community to be vigilant in combating intolerance, including by prohibiting incitement to racial, national and religious hatred and hate speech, ending racial profiling, and upholding the integrity of the international refugee-protection regime. Furthermore, international law requires States to take effective action to prevent and eliminate discrimination on all grounds and in all fields of civil, economic, political, social, and cultural life, and to protect and stand up for human rights for all.

Mr. Sovann Ke, Cambodia (Vice-President), took the Chair.

In conclusion, I join my voice to others in the common struggle against racial discrimination and thank civil society for its tireless work in the realm of human rights and the restoration of dignity to systems and victims of racial discrimination. However, the buck does not stop there, as racial discrimination destabilizes societies. By acting together through our global campaign to end discrimination, we all have a role to play in lifting up humanity, in accordance with our collective responsibility as highlighted by the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Mr. Ahmad Tajuddin (Malaysia): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's deep gratitude and appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of Tonga on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Today's event is a timely one, as the world is witnessing an escalation in unspeakable tragedies that have claimed many innocent lives in recent months. Just last week, we were shocked at the horrific news of the 50 Muslims massacred while submitting themselves to God. In October of last year, 11 Jews were killed while gathering for Shabbat morning services. Much more must be done, because innocent victims in many parts of the world are being persecuted by extremists simply because they do not belong to the same racial or religious groups. Our Governments have a responsibility to prevent such tragedies from recurring. They must stop, and in order to do that we must mobilize our collective efforts and implement the provisions of the Durban Declaration and its Programme of Action with full conviction. It is important that we, the international community, promote tolerance, inclusion, reconciliation, mutual understanding, respect and solidarity in our common desire to live and act together in peace and harmony.

Looking back at the Christchurch tragedy of 10 days ago, it is no secret that the attacks resulted from the rise in nationalist sentiments and extreme supremacist ideologies. To recall the words of Edward Said, a Palestinian scholar, such sentiments and extremist ideologies are rooted in a clash of ignorance. A lack of knowledge about other racial and religious communities has undeniably contributed to the growth of hatred and

animosity. Malaysia believes that our differences will be embraced when we learn to accept and appreciate the diversity, distinctiveness and uniqueness of others. It is therefore important that we prohibit hate speech and prevent the spread of extremist ideologies, particularly through social media, as such sentiments could easily influence members of the general public who may not have the opportunity to learn about other racial, cultural or religious communities. Such sentiments are undoubtedly dangerous, since those already prone to radicalization may become more susceptible to the ideologies of extremist groups bent on inciting hatred and provoking violence.

Recognizing that a lack of understanding may contribute to excessive nationalist sentiments and extreme supremacist ideologies, which may in turn lead to a greater incidence of violence than we are seeing now, Malaysia calls on all States Members of the United Nations to seriously promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue, which undoubtedly plays a vital role in promoting peace, moderation and religious tolerance. Malaysia firmly believes that its success in inculcating the values of moderation, respect and tolerance in its diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation has contributed to its harmonious society. We have therefore pursued efforts to promote sustainable development inclusive of all communities as an integral part of driving our country forward.

I would like to conclude by assuring all Member States, stakeholders and our partners of Malaysia's full commitment to our common goal of achieving a sustainable and peaceful world. We trust that this annual commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will convey to the world our strong resolve against the destruction wrought by racial discrimination and underscore the importance of promoting empathy among people of different cultures, religions and civilizations.

Mr. Koba (Indonesia): I would like to note at the outset that Indonesia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Tonga on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

We concur with the statement by the Chair of our Group that this theme is indeed apt and timely, particularly in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March. Indonesia strongly condemns those attacks, in which people of many different

backgrounds, including citizens of our country, lost their lives. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the world's most serious threats to international peace and security. We want to take this opportunity to convey our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of New Zealand, and to wish the injured a speedy and full recovery.

The Christchurch attacks serve as a reminder of the dangers of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. They also demonstrate the damage that is done by a lack of understanding of Islam as a religion of peace. In that regard, we urge everyone to refrain from counterproductive statements that can only exacerbate the situation. We must prevent a clash of civilizations. At this time we must work together to reinforce the values of tolerance within and among Member States. We should redouble our efforts to promote interfaith dialogue, improve mutual understanding and combat discrimination against human beings on any grounds, whether race, religion or ethnicity.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm Indonesia's strong commitment to implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which we have been party since 1999. Today our commitment entails preventing the rise of nationalist populism and supremacist ideologies, in a mission that all Member States must undertake together, as members of one human race.

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We recognize and reaffirm the outcomes of the first World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, which we view as a vital milestone in the struggle for equal rights for all human beings. However, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action cannot reach its potential as long as various Powers fail to show sufficient political will to advance the implementation of its mandate. It is deplorable that today discrimination continues against entire ethnic groups, nations and communities. Governments and political parties with a racist, xenophobic and anti-immigrant platform not only persist but are on the rise. Social exclusion and marginalization continues

to affect peoples, minorities and other social groups and individuals.

In the face of this inescapable reality, it is urgent that we work to fully realize the purposes, goals and actions agreed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome document of its Review Conference. It is urgent that we take practical new measures to eliminate modern forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, eliminate their root causes, including underdevelopment, poverty and social exclusion, and establish a new international order based on equity, solidarity and social justice.

We reiterate our commitment to continue supporting such efforts, and in that regard we affirm our determination to continue implementing at the national level the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent and supporting the efforts of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Free and universal access to culture, health and education has contributed to the process of ensuring the dignity and upholding the rights of the Cuban people, regardless of the colour of their skin, together with full recognition of the heritage of the principal ethnic constituents of the Cuban nation. The commitment of the Government of Cuba to the total eradication of racial discrimination is based on the fact that the Cuban people feel extremely proud of their African roots, as expressed through our unique identity and culture. The growth of Cuban culture and nationality has been nourished by our African heritage. Hundreds of thousands of Cuban people have, moreover, contributed, with their blood and sweat, to the emancipation of Africa, a continent to which all of humankind will forever be indebted.

Cuba remains steadfast in its determination to support and promote all activities carried out to implement the commitments of Durban.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting.

Through the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which enjoy wide global support, the international community has established a robust framework

to combat racism and discrimination. However, discrimination and extremism remain serious problems around the world. Attacks on places of worship of all types of religions, including the one that occurred recently in Christchurch, New Zealand, underscore how important it is to redouble our efforts to combat all forms of hatred of religions, racism and discrimination. In that regard, we want to reaffirm our commitment to supporting all States working to combat such racially, ethnically or religiously motivated terrorist attacks, which are condemned by all religions and related international conventions. Our region has suffered decades of hatred resulting in similar attacks and destroying the lives of the minorities who form the fabric of our Arab world.

Hate speech has recently gained ground in many parts of the world, severely constraining development efforts and destroying our gains. The United Arab Emirates has therefore joined international alliances with the aim of effectively countering Da'esh groups and preventing young people from falling prey to extremist ideologies. We contributed to founding and hosting the Hedayah International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, in cooperation with the United Kingdom, and the Sawab Center, in cooperation with the United States, with the aim of addressing extremism and hatred of terrorist groups while promoting tolerance and peace around the world.

The United Arab Emirates also supports moderate religious initiatives that seek to counter terrorist and extremist thought by hosting the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies and the Muslim Council of Elders. In that regard, I want to emphasize that the United Arab Emirates takes a firm position against all forms of extremism and terrorism. We have a zero-tolerance policy on the incitement of hatred and violence. We are against any party that provides extremist and terrorist groups with assistance or safe havens. Combating extremism and terrorism, and their supporters, is therefore a national priority for us. Together with our allies, we reject and condemn all activities intended to foment or finance terrorism, or to interfere in the internal affairs of other States in order to promote sedition and spread violence. As we have been witnessing troubling trends across the world, we declared 2019 a National Year of Tolerance to coincide with the historic visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates, which culminated in the signing by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of

Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, of a document on human brotherhood for world peace and coexistence, designed to establish a genuine dialogue among religions.

Since the United Arab Emirates was founded we have been institutionalizing measures to fight racial discrimination. In 2015, we issued a federal decree to combat discrimination and hatred, which was followed by our establishment of a Ministry for Tolerance, aimed at promoting the Government's role in nurturing the value of tolerance, encouraging dialogue and contributing to international efforts to enhance it.

Lastly, I would like to conclude by reaffirming our commitment to eradicating discrimination in all its forms, in particular by combating extremism and promoting a model based on tolerance, openness, diversity and coexistence with others.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in this commemorative meeting. The Assembly has concluded its commemorative meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 72.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President: I now call the attention of the General Assembly to a report of the Fifth Committee under sub-item (b) of agenda item 117 entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions", contained in document A/73/483/Add.2.

Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 117 at its 65th plenary meeting on 22 December 2018. In order for the Assembly to consider the report of the Fifth Committee under that sub-item, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 117.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 117 and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 117 *(continued)***Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments****(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/73/483/Add.2)**

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 117, concerning a vacancy in the membership of the Committee on Contributions as a result of the resignation of Mr. Evgeny Kalugin of the Russian Federation. In paragraph 4 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Vadim Laputin of the Russian Federation

as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 25 March 2019 and ending on 31 December 2020.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Vadim Laputin of the Russian Federation as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 25 March 2019 and ending on 31 December 2020?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 117?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.