



CELEBRATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

26 November 2015

**“ICERD - Fifty years of fighting racial discrimination:
looking back and moving forward”**

Background Note

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”(Nelson Mandela)

1. Introduction

The International Convention on the Elimination of All form of Racial Discrimination (the “Convention”) is the first UN human rights treaty that was adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 1965 through its resolution 2106. Drafted against the backdrop of the international struggle against Apartheid, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America and the ending of colonialism, the Convention translated the international community’s moral outrage against racism into a binding legal norm, and has been the key international instrument to combat racial discrimination worldwide. To celebrate its 50th anniversary, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (the “Committee”) will hold a day of celebration during its eighty-eighth session to engage with States parties and other stakeholders in looking back at the Convention’s achievements as well as identifying ways to move forward in making the Convention’s goal a reality: a world free of all forms of racial discrimination.

Since its first session in 1970, the Committee has monitored the effective implementation of the Convention by examining State party reports and issuing country-specific recommendations in its concluding observations; providing recourse to legal remedies for individuals under its complaints procedure and establishing key jurisprudence; contributing to the development of international human rights law by clarifying the scope and nature of State party obligations under the Convention through the adoption of General Recommendations on specific articles of the Convention as well as on substantive issues; alerting the international community to situations requiring urgent attention to prevent conflicts and serious violations of the Convention through its Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedure; and continuously engaging with States parties to implement the concluding observations through its Follow-up Procedure.



Indeed, over the past 45 years, the Committee has effectively addressed new and emerging issues within the framework of the Convention and adopted innovative practices to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. However, the effective implementation of the Convention remains hampered by delays in the submission of State party reports, the limited number of States parties having made a declaration under article 14 on the individual complaints procedure, lack of universal ratification of the Convention, and limited implementation of the Committee's concluding observations on the ground. Moreover, intolerance, xenophobia, racist hate speech, and racial discrimination continue to plague societies worldwide.

2. Focus and objectives

The aim of the event is twofold: to bring together States parties to the Convention and other stakeholders to share their experience on how the Convention has helped make a difference in combating racial discrimination, and to identify current challenges as well as solutions in eradicating racism and ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

3. Date and Venue

The celebration will take place at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room XX, on 26 November 2015, from 10:00 to 13:00 and from 15:00 to 18:00.

4. Methodology

The discussion in the morning will focus on the achievements of the Convention and the Committee's work, highlighting good practices and positive examples of concrete results. The discussion in the afternoon will focus on the challenges in eradicating racism, including contemporary thematic issues as well as obstacles in fully translating the provisions of the Convention into practice at the domestic level. Both morning and afternoon segments will each commence with brief introductory comments by speakers, and will be followed by an interactive discussion with comments by States parties and other stakeholders from the floor. The format of the event is meant to allow participants to exchange views in a frank and open dialogue. The Committee therefore asks participants to avoid reading out formal statements during the event. Participants are also encouraged to share their views and opinions during the event via social media using the hashtag #fightracism.

5. Participation

The Committee invites States parties, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, United Nations human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and other relevant organizations and individuals to attend the meeting to share their experience and express their views. Written contributions specifically related to concrete best practices and achievements of ICERD are highly encouraged and welcomed, and will be posted on the 50th anniversary website.



In order to allow as many stakeholders to participate in the discussion, oral interventions should not exceed more than three minutes.

6. Outcome

The celebration will enable collective stocktaking of the achievements of the Convention over the past 50 years, reflection of lessons learned, and identification of ways in which current challenges can be addressed. By webcasting the event and encouraging participants to use social media, it will raise awareness of the Convention and the work of the Committee among a wider audience. By bringing together various stakeholders, the event will also strengthen collaborative efforts to effectively implement the Convention.

7. Accreditation

Please fill out the registration form available on the website (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CERD/50/Pages/Icerd50.aspx>) and send it to the Secretariat by email: cerd@ohchr.org or by Fax: (41 22) 917 90 08 by **Friday, 13 November 2015**.

For further information, please contact the Secretariat of the Committee at: cerd@ohchr.org.