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**International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**March 21, 2023**

**In a context of a global rise of xenophobia, UN experts call on States to adopt comprehensive policies to eradicate xenophobia and build inclusive, sustainable, and cohesive societies**

Migrations, especially those linked to the violation of basic human rights - armed conflicts, multiple forms of violence, inequality, poverty, discrimination due to various factors, natural disasters, the search for decent employment, etc. - are a structural phenomenon of the contemporary world. Over the last few decades, this displacement of migrants (including asylum seekers and refugees) on an unprecedented scale - in terms of their numbers, but also because of their dynamic and multidirectional nature - has gradually transformed the social fabric of an ever-increasing number of societies.

In this context, in many countries, the promotion of **restrictive migration policies has been accompanied by xenophobic discourses, discriminatory stereotypes about migrants, and a speech that use migrants as scapegoats for the challenges faced by each society**. From political, communication or other sectors, migrants are unfairly singled out as a problem or threat, which leads to the promotion of policies and practices that violate or restrict their rights - including the human right to asylum, education, health, due process guarantees, child protection, among others. Xenophobia leads, on the one hand, to hate speech and acts of violence against migrants and their families. On the other, it is linked to a narrow and security approach to migration -instead a comprehensive one-, which includes arbitrary detention and deportation practices, and it tries to justify discrimination in the exercise of rights based on nationality or migration status, eventually ending up in and increase of inequality.

In 2020, the UN Secretary General raised its concern about a “tsunami” of xenophobia amid the pandemic, while migrants were named as responsible for spreading the virus. Throughout the last few years, h**ate incidents, social tensions, and xenophobic narratives linked to restrictive or discriminatory policies and practices have been widespread on a global scale.** **While evidence from every region alerts on a worryingly rising trend, xenophobia represents a serious and damaging factor for societies**. Indeed, although it directly affects the lives and rights of migrants and their families, particularly those in vulnerable situations, xenophobia also has an impact on society as a whole and corrodes social cohesion by generating hatred and conflict in the community, promoting prejudice, legitimizing inequality and social exclusion, and, among other consequences, affecting children’s development. In turn, this obstructs the fulfilment of numerous public policy goals in social, economic and other areas -e.g., education, health, security, justice, social protection-. **Xenophobia, and its consequences on policies, practices, opinions and attitudes, leads to societies with fewer opportunities for inclusive and sustainable human development, mortgaging the living conditions of future generations**.

**The complexity, extent and seriousness of xenophobia require States to develop and implement comprehensive public policies**. Therefore, areas such as justice, education, communication, health, children and youth policies, among many others, must be part of a comprehensive policy aimed at eradicating xenophobia. **A holistic, cross-cutting approach is needed**, with the participation of multiple public institutions at the national and local levels, civil society -including migrant organizations and actors at the neighbourhood or community level- and specialized international agencies. Media can contribute effectively to the fight against xenophobia and hate speech through balanced coverage of migration, refraining of depicting it as a problem or threat, and society, not as a problem and avoiding the reproduction of xenophobic prejudices and stereotypes.

It is also necessary that a comprehensive public policy to eliminate xenophobia include an **intersectionality approach**. Experts recall that xenophobia has a specific impact on certain people due to situations of double or multiple discrimination associated with racism, racial discrimination, gender inequality and other structural forms of inequality. Indeed, in addition to nationality and/or migratory status, discrimination based on gender, socio-economic status, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or disability, among others, leads to the channelling of xenophobia towards certain social groups, deepening its harmful effects.

This comprehensive policy also requires the design of **short- and long-term objectives**, as well as indicators to periodically measure compliance. Experts point out that **a comprehensive policy to eradicate xenophobia contributes** to the efforts that States are making and should continue to make **to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Human Development**. A society where xenophobia expands and is promoted from different spheres-including the political-cannot lead to a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future based on the human right to development and the realization of the rights of all people in it.

Cooperation between States, through bilateral, regional and global initiatives, can be a central tool for promoting policies aimed at eradicating xenophobia, including legal and policy tools. In this regard, both UN Human Rights Treaties -as the ICERD and ICPRMW- and other commitments assumed by States in global processes, as the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and are tools developed by States for enhancing human rights without any discrimination and preventing threats, as xenophobia, that could affect them.

In the **Global Compact for Orderly, Safe and Regular Migration** (Goal 16), States committed to **ensure full social inclusion and cohesion through integration policies**, programs and activities, including ways to foster acceptance of diversity and facilitate social cohesion and inclusion, such as the promotion of welcoming and safe school environments. They have also committed to "**Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote an evidence-based public discourse to change perceptions of migration**" (Objective 17), through a series of measures. These include implementing laws that criminalize hate crimes against migrants; training security agents and other public officials in the prevention of such crimes and assistance to their victims; promoting independent, objective and quality journalism in the treatment of migration; and refraining from allocating public funds to media that systematically promote xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination against migrants; the establishment of mechanisms to prevent and detect the use of racial profiling of migrants by public authorities; the promotion of awareness campaigns on the positive contributions of migration; and, among others, measures at the local level and in the context of electoral campaigns.

In addition, it is appropriate to recall that the **CMW** makes recommendations to the States parties to the conventions whose implementation they respectively monitor. These recommendations include numerous measures, from a rights-based approach, to address, prevent and eradicate xenophobia. In addition, the CMW in partnership with CERD will start working together on **a joint initiative aimed at developing a General Comment on policies and practices for a comprehensive approach to xenophobia and its impact on the rights of migrants (including asylum seekers and refugees) and their families, and, eventually, host societies**. The aim is to develop an Authoritative Guidance for States that will contribute to the promotion of inclusive, cohesive and sustainable societies in a structural context of increasing human mobility and diversity of communities on a global scale.