**52nd session of the Human Rights Council**

**Debate in commemoration of the**

**International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination   
*Theme: The urgency of combatting racism and racial discrimination***

***75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights***

*Concept note (as of 23 March 2023)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Wednesday, 29 March 2023, 4 to 6 p.m.** **Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online platform (Zoom)** *(will be broadcast live and archived on* [*https://media.un.org/en/webtv*](https://media.un.org/en/webtv)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The panel discussion will gather speakers who are known for their active role in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and who are from diverse backgrounds. The panellists will discuss the current state of play in the fight against racism and the importance of accelerating progress towards racial equality for the benefit of the whole of society and future generations. They will share their experience, expertise and recommendations on how to address some of the most pressing challenges and obstacles to combat racism in all its forms and manifestations. They will also consider the role the Council, Member States, relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society and other relevant stakeholders should play. | |
| **Chair:** | H.E. Mr. Muhammadou M.O. Kah, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council | |
| **Opening statement:** | **Mr. Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights | |
| **Panellists:** | * **Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr**, Chair of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent *(video message)* * **Ms. Verene Shepherd**, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination *(video message)* * **Mr. Doudou Diène**, Rapporteur of the Advisory Board of the Foundation for the Remembrance of Slavery and former Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance *(video message)* * **Ms. Saadia Mosbah**, President of Mnemty Organization *(video message)* | |
| **Outcome:** | The panel discussion is expected to contribute to:   * reaffirming the urgency of combatting racism and racial discrimination for the benefit of the whole of society, in particular youth, and future generations; * bolstering political will to take concrete and coordinated action to fight racism and racial discrimination; and * renewing and strengthening commitments to effectively address racism and racial discrimination, including by working towards the full implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. |
| **Mandate:** | In its resolution [77/205](https://www.undocs.org/A/RES/77/205), “A global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action”, the General Assembly requested the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Human Rights Council to continue to convene annual commemorative meetings of the Assembly and the Council during the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, with the appropriate focus and themes, and in this context encouraged the participation of eminent personalities active in the struggle against racial discrimination, Member States and civil society organizations in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Assembly and the Council, respectively (para. 48). |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by a two-part interactive discussion and by conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statement, panellists’ presentations, their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States and observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Panellists will respond to questions and comments during the remaining time available.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Background:** | The Human Rights Council and the General Assembly have stressed the importance of fully integrating the matter of combating racism into the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (resolutions [51/32](http://www.undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/51/32) and [77/205](https://www.undocs.org/A/RES/77/205)).  The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (article 1) and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (article 2). In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the World Conference on Human Rights reiterated that respect for human rights without distinction of any kind was a fundamental rule of international human rights law and noted that the speedy and comprehensive elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was a priority for the international community.  In the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, States not only reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of equality and non-discrimination as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but they adopted by consensus an action-oriented and visionary programme of action. On the occasion of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, Heads of State and Government affirmed their strong determination to mobilize political will and to accelerate momentum to make the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the protection of the victims thereof, a high priority.  In his report “Our Common Agenda”, the Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that racism, intolerance and discrimination continued to exist in all societies. In his call to action for human rights, the Secretary-General stressed that diversity is an asset, not a threat, to our societies. In a recent report, the High Commissioner called on States to step up implementation of the 20 actions contained in the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality – noting that if implemented as a complete package alongside the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and recommendations from human rights bodies they would lead to concrete and positive impacts – and to demonstrate greater political will to accelerate action.  Most recently, the General Assembly affirmed that the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and all their abhorrent and contemporary forms and manifestations was a matter of priority for the international community (resolution [77/205](https://www.undocs.org/A/RES/77/205)). |
| **Background documents:** | * General Assembly resolution [77/205](https://www.undocs.org/A/RES/77/205) of 15 December 2022 entitled “A global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action” * Human Rights Council resolution [51/32](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/523/35/pdf/G2252335.pdf?OpenElement) of 7 October 2022 entitled “From rhetoric to reality: a global call for concrete action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” * General Assembly resolution [76/1](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/76/1) of 22 September 2021 entitled “United against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” (Political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action) * Human Rights Council resolution [47/21](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/199/03/PDF/G2119903.pdf?OpenElement) of 13 July 2021 entitled “Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers through transformative change for racial justice and equality” * [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](https://waps.ohchr.org/en/publications/reference-publications/durban-declaration-and-programme-action) (2001) * [Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Durban_Review_Conference_outcome_document.pdf) (2009) * Report of the High Commissioner, “Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers through transformative change for racial justice and equality” ([A/HRC/51/53](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/440/71/PDF/G2244071.pdf?OpenElement), 2022) * High Commissioner, “Four-point Agenda Towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality” (annex to [A/HRC/47/53](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/122/03/PDF/G2112203.pdf?OpenElement), 2021) * Report of the Secretary-General, “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf), 2021) * Secretary-General, [The Highest Aspiration – A Call to Action for Human Rights](https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Asperation_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf) (2020) |