

**Statement of the Chairpersons and mandate holders of the UN Anti-Racism
Mechanisms delivered at the Meeting with the UN Secretary-General,**

UN HQ, New York

26 October 2023

Dear Secretary-General,

As the Chairpersons and mandate holders of the eight United Nations Anti-racism mechanisms¹, we are pleased to meet with you as a group for the very first time.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss our common agenda to address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

We would like to thank you for your statements and reports which call for action to address racial discrimination. We welcome your latest report² entitled “Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent” which focuses on reparatory justice and recommends that States show strong leadership and political will in tackling the lasting consequences of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism.

We know that you share our concern about the current state of the world with regards to manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Through our work we see clearly that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance continue to be a cause of conflict in every region of the world. We are seeing a dangerous regression at every level and in many spaces in the fight against racism. There is a sharp rise in religious intolerance which is fuelling divisions and providing a justification for violence. There is a resurgence of hate speech and incitement to hatred and dissemination of ideas which promote nationalism and superiority based on race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin. Descent based discrimination, including on the basis of caste, continues in many countries. Some public figures, including politicians, engage in racist and xenophobic expressions contribute to inciting racist hatred and violence against national and ethnic minorities, people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, Asians and people of Asian descent, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The criminalization of irregular migration has increased xenophobia and detention of migrants many of whom are women and children. The principle of non-refoulement and legal safeguards are disregarded. Racial profiling and racially motivated excessive use of force by law enforcement officials has resulted in deaths

¹ The statement is attributable to the following Chairpersons and Member of the UN anti-racism mechanisms are as follows: Ms. Verene A. Shepherd – Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD); Ms. Ashwini K.P – Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (SR Racism); H.E. Marie Chantal Rwakazina – Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG); Ms. Barbara G. Reynolds – Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD); Ms. Hanna Suchocka – Chair of the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (GIEE); H.E. Ms. Kadra Ahmed Hassan – Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards; Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr – Chair of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD), and Ms. Tracie L. Keesee – Co-Chair of International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the context of Law Enforcement

² A/78/317

and impunity in most cases. The digital divide is often permeated by racial bias in access and there is racial abuse coded in many aspects of AI. There is a lack of adequate legislation and effective oversight mechanisms at national level to address racism, and impunity remains a serious concern.

As you know in 2001 Member States adopted by consensus the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action which is a comprehensive framework for addressing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance globally.

At the international level false narratives and dis-information surrounding the World Conference Against Racism have hindered concrete action to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Political will is urgently needed to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. In addition, the legacies of colonialism and enslavement must finally be addressed. The ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Haiti is a stark reminder that the present and the future are inextricably linked to the past.

We have collectively emphasized that racism and racial discrimination undermines the universality of human rights and the gains made by humankind. The full and effective implementation of international commitments including both the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action has reached a critical stage. We have repeatedly called for stronger political will from Member States to advance the global anti-racial discrimination agenda, and for them to demonstrate collective action, including through constructive engagement at the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and with all the UN anti-racism mechanisms and bodies.

We would also like to inform you of our joint call to the General Assembly to consider the proclamation of the second International Decade for People of African Descent for the period 2025-2034.

Today, we seek from you a reinvigorated engagement on issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in all your policy statements, reports and recommendations. Your visible and vocal support on this important anti-racism work is crucial. Racism should continue to be reflected in your core messaging and in renewed efforts aimed at multilateralism at the UN such as Our Common Agenda, the Digital Compact and the Summit of the Future among others. The inclusion of the anti-racism agenda in the Summit of the Future to be held in 2024 would be an excellent opportunity to address structural and systemic racial discrimination and its root causes and commit to future action.

We also call upon you to urge Member States to show greater resolve and commitment to implement the extensive recommendations made by the anti-racism mechanisms and bodies, and to address the current and historical legacies of racism.

UN agencies, funds and programmes must also be involved in addressing the global anti-racism agenda. Your leadership and guidance are crucial to ensure that work undertaken to address racial discrimination is mainstreamed, prioritized, and sustained in UN policies, programming, budgeting, monitoring and implementation.

We thank you once again for this opportunity. We commit to working together with you towards eliminating all forms of racial discrimination everywhere. Thank you.