

REGIONAL MEETING FOR THE MIDDLE EAST ON THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

**Organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
(OHCHR)**

**31 October and 1 November 2022, Room XXI at the Palais des Nations of the United
Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland**

Programme of work

Geneva Time

BACKGROUND

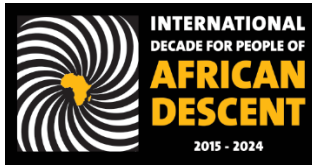
In the framework of the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent ([A/RES/69/16](#)), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is requested to organize regional meetings for various five regions during the Decade. Three such meetings took place for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015, for Europe, Central Asia and North America in 2017 and for Africa in 2019, respectively, and addressed the three sub-themes of the Decade - “recognition”, “justice” and “development”. The fourth meeting is convened for the Middle East in 2022.

The International Decade for People of African Descent, proclaimed by General Assembly resolution [68/237](#) and to be observed from 2015 to 2024, provides a solid framework for the United Nations, Member States, civil society, in particular people of African descent, and all other relevant actors to join together, and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development.

The Decade also aims to celebrate the important contributions of people of African descent worldwide, advance social justice and inclusion policies, eradicate racism and intolerance, promote human rights, and assist in creating better, more prosperous communities, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals spearheaded by the United Nations.

The meeting will aim at:

- Raising awareness about the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent in the Middle East region;
- Strengthening national, regional and international cooperation and facilitating the exchange of good practices;
- Promoting a greater knowledge of and respect for the historical and contemporary contributions of people of African descent in the Middle East region.



MONDAY 31 OCTOBER

9:00 -- 10:00 Registration

OPENING SESSION

10:00 – 11:00 Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

Gabriela Ramos, Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

H.E. Ali Hussein Al Sammak, Permanent Observer, League of Arab States Mission in Geneva

Epsy Campbell, Chair Designate of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent and former Vice-President of Costa Rica

Nawal Ibrahim Alhawsawi, founder of Adam Initiative

Appointment of a Rapporteur for the meeting

Adoption of the Agenda

General statements

11:00 – 12:00 **PANEL DISCUSSION 1: RECOGNITION – Sharing best practices in the promotion of equality and non-discrimination**

The first panel discussion will address the pillar “recognition” of the programme of activities of the Decade, with a focus on the promotion of the right to equality and non-discrimination and education on equality and awareness raising. It will aim at taking stock of the measures in place to promote equality and non-discrimination in the region, including legal, policy, institutional, as well as educational and awareness-raising measures. Participants will be invited to discuss challenges and opportunities, as well as to share good practices in the promotion of equality and non-discrimination.

Moderator: Mohammad Ali Al Nsour, Chief of Middle East and North Africa section, UN Human Rights Office

Panellists:

- Ibrahima Guissé, member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Hilary Gbedemah member and former Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women



- H.E. Mahmoud Afifi, Ambassador and Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt for International Social and Humanitarian Affairs, Commission Member of the Independent Permanent Human Rights of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

General debate: Member States, representatives of the international and regional organizations, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and representatives of civil society are invited to deliver statements.

12:00 – 14:00 Break

14:00 – 15:00 PANEL DISCUSSION 1 (continued)

Moderator: Reem Mazzawi, Coordinator, Middle East and North Africa section, UN Human Rights Office

Panellists

- Mahdi Al-Tamimi, Head of Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights Office in Basra
- Jamila Debech Ksiksi, Co-fonder of AWLN and chair of Awln Tunisian chapter, activist against Racism and Discrimination, former MP, former chair Women Caucus in PanAfricana Parliament.

General debate: Member States, representatives of the international and regional organizations, NHRIs and representatives of civil society are invited to deliver statements.

15:00 – 16:00 PANEL DISCUSSION 2: JUSTICE – Acknowledging the past and the historical contributions of Africans and people of African descent to the cultural, economic and social development of the region

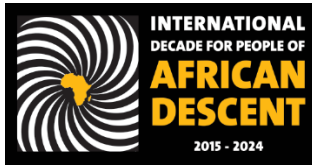
The second panel discussion will address the pillar of “justice” of the programme of activities of the Decade, with a focus on acknowledging the past and highlighting the contributions of Africans and people of African descent, including formerly enslaved Africans, to the cultural, social and economic development of the region.

Moderator: Yvette Kaboza, Programme Specialist, Inclusion, Rights and Dialogue Section, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Panellists:

- Ali Moussa Iye, Founding Director of Afrospectives, a Global Africa Initiative, and former Head of the UNESCO History and Memory for Dialogue Department
- Inès Mrad Dali, Researcher Center for Historical Studies, School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in France

UNESCO video screening



General debate: Member States, representatives of the international and regional organizations, NHRIs and representatives of civil society are invited to deliver statements.

TUESDAY 1 NOVEMBER

10:00 – 11:00 PANEL DISCUSSION 2 (continued)

Moderator: Yvette Kaboza, Programme Specialist, Inclusion, Rights and Dialogue Section, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Panellists:

- Aïcha Bilkhair, Research Advisor, National Library and Archives
- Beeta Baghoolizadeh, Associate Research Scholar at Princeton University
- Suleiman Quous, Director of African Community Association of Jerusalem

General debate: Member States, representatives of the international and regional organizations, NHRIs and representatives of civil society are invited to deliver statements.

11:00 – 12:00 PANEL DISCUSSION 3: DEVELOPMENT – Opportunities and challenges in access to development and to economic and social rights

The third panel discussion will address the pillar “development” of the programme of activities of the Decade. It will highlight challenges, which Africans and people of African descent may face in the enjoyment of the right to development and economic and social rights.

Moderator: Marie-Joseph Ayissi, Secretary of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, UN Human Rights Office

Panellists:

- Karina Nersesyan, Deputy Regional Director for Arab States, United Nations Population Funds
- Thawra Yousuf Yakob, Representative of Lotus Feminist Cultural Association
- Noman Alhothaifi, President of “people of Black skin”, National Minorities Council of Yemen

General debate: Member States, representatives of the international and regional organizations, NHRIs and representatives of civil society are invited to deliver statements.

12:00 – 14:00 Break



14:00 – 15:00 PANEL DISCUSSION 3 (continued)

Moderator: Marie-Joseph Ayissi, Secretary of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, UN Human Rights Office

Panellists:

- Bonny Ibhawoh, Vice-Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development
- Sushil Raj, member of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent
- Max Tunon, Head of the United Nations International Labour Organization Office in Doha, Qatar

General debate: Member States, representatives of the international and regional organizations, NHRIs and representatives of civil society are invited to deliver statements.

15:00 – 16:00 CLOSING SESSION

- Summary of general debates by the Rapporteur
- Closing remarks by Peggy Hicks, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, OHCHR
- General statements