

**Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**  
**Debate on the midterm review**  
**of the International Decade for People of African Descent**

*Concept note (draft as of 7 February 2020)*

- Date and venue:** Friday, 13 March 2020, 4 - 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva  
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** The debate will be aimed at:
- Assessing the level of implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent, including an exchange of good practices and activities already undertaken;
  - Identifying current challenges, which are affecting the implementation of the programme of activities with a view to generating action-oriented recommendations which will inform the discussion during the midterm review at the General Assembly in New York (mid-2020);
  - Taking stock of the progress made and decide on further actions to be taken at every level.
- Chair:** H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statement:** Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Panellists:**
- Panellist 1
  - Panellist 2
  - Panellist 3
  - Panellist 4
- Outcome:** An informal summary of the discussion will be prepared.
- Mandate:** The General Assembly, in paragraph 29 of its resolution 74/137 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” 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 to hold a debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent with the participation of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 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.
- Format:** The debate will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two slots. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including opening statements, panellists’ presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two slots of interventions from the floor for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).
- The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the debate and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. 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:** In its resolution 74/137, the General Assembly welcomed the proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, as contained in its resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013, and the celebratory launch of the Decade on 10 December 2014. It further welcomed the programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent, in which it was recommended that a forum on people of African descent be established and that consideration be given to the elaboration of a draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

The General Assembly also welcomed the convening of regional meetings by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to effectively implement the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent, encouraged Member States and other stakeholders to adopt action-oriented recommendations at the meetings, and called upon States, regional organizations and other stakeholders to facilitate the participation of civil society from their respective countries and regions at the meetings.

The General Assembly referred to the constructive discussions held in Geneva on the modalities of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, and decided to define them at its seventy-fourth session, and finally welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Human Rights Council with regard to the preparatory process for the midterm review for the International Decade for People of African Descent.

In its resolution 69/16 on the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, the General Assembly recognized that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is a comprehensive United Nations framework and a solid foundation for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and represents a new stage in the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to restore the rights and dignity of people of African descent.

The implementation of the programme of activities is an integral part of the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and in compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination as the principal international instruments for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The programme of activities underlines that States should, at the national level, take concrete and practical steps through the adoption and effective implementation of national and international legal frameworks, policies and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent, taking into account the particular situation of women, girls and young males. These concrete and practical steps would focus in particular, on the right to equality and non-discrimination, education on equality and awareness-raising, information-gathering, participation and inclusion, access to justice, special measures, right to development and measures against poverty, education, employment, health, housing and address multiple or aggravated discrimination.

The programme of activities also outlines various measures and activities that should be taken at the regional and international levels, including those that should be taken by the international community and international and regional organizations, in particular relevant United Nations programmes, funds, specialized agencies and other bodies, international financial and development institutions, and other international mechanisms which, within their areas of competence, should give high priority to programmes and projects specifically tailored for combating racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent, taking fully into account the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

The General Assembly decided to appoint the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to act as coordinator of the Decade in order to follow up on the implementation of activities in the framework of the Decade.

It requested the Secretary-General to submit annually a progress report on the implementation of the activities of the Decade.

It further requested the President of the General Assembly to convene a midterm review to take stock of the progress made and decide on further necessary actions before the seventy-fourth session of the Assembly.

Background documents:

- [General Assembly resolution 74/137](#) of 12 November 2019 entitled “A global call for concrete action for the total 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”;
- [General Assembly resolution 69/16](#) of 18 November 2014 entitled “Programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent”;
- [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action \(2001\)](#);
- [Durban Review Conference \(2009\) Outcome Document](#);
- 10th Anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2011) Political Declaration – [General Assembly resolution 66/3](#) of 22 September 2011 entitled “United against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”;
- Reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent ([A/70/339](#), [A/71/290](#), [A/72/323](#), [A/73/354](#) and [A/74/308](#));
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Ms. Tendayi Achiume, to the General Assembly on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance ([A/74/321](#)).