

Debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent

Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Concept note (draft as of 5 February 2021)

- Date and venue:** **Friday, 12 March 2021, 4 to 6 p.m.**
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** The debate will be aimed at:
- Assessing the situation of global youth and the role of youth in combatting racial discrimination and fostering dialogue and intergroup relations;
 - Assessing the prevalence of intersecting forms of discrimination that can affect youth, including youth of African descent;
 - Taking stock of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education, development and empowerment of youth and children, in particular of African descent, with a focus on racial discrimination.
- Chair:** **H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan**, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statement:** **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif**, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Panellists:**
- Panellist 1 TBD
 - Panellist 2 TBD
 - Panellist 3 TBD
 - Panellist 4 TBD
- Outcome:** The panel discussion will contribute to the following outcomes:
- Increased understanding of achievements and challenges in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in particular concerning youth;
 - Enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, including youth and United Nations entities;
 - Renewed commitments to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and support its follow-up processes on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of its adoption.
- Mandate:** The General Assembly, in paragraph 42 of its resolution 75/237 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 panel discussion 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 segments. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including 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, 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 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. 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.

Background: In his report A/75/363 to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General illustrated how children and young people of African descent experience racial discrimination manifested in its various dimensions. The report also highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has further magnified existing patterns of discrimination and outlines promising practices for the realization of the rights of children and young people of African descent. The Secretary-General noted that in many parts of the world, children and young people of African descent do not fully enjoy their human rights. Their situation could be best understood through a rights-based approach that recognized the intersection of structural discrimination with race, ethnicity, national or social origin, sex, migration status, property, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, birth or other status. When developing strategies to implement the programme of activities for the International Decade, not only racial discrimination but also other discriminatory grounds that intersect with race and ethnicity should be taken into account.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and is likely to reinforce social exclusion. The [Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19](#) looked at the four areas of impacts on young people: namely, employment, education and training, mental well-being, and rights and voices. It found that the pandemic had a severe impact on youth, e.g. one in six youth in the survey had stopped working since the outbreak of the coronavirus. Three out of four young students and youth combining study and work experienced school closures, yet not all were able to transition into online and distance learning. And COVID-19 left one in eight young students without any access to education or training. Youth in lower-income countries were hardly affected by the disruptions in education. Notably, 65 per cent of youth in high-income countries were taught classes via video-lectures, compared to 55 per cent in middle-income and 18 per cent in low-income countries. These figures underline the deep digital divides that exist between regions. The pandemic and government responses also limited the social activism of youth. One in three young people, who took part in this survey, noticed a marked impact on their right to participate in public affairs, while over a quarter experienced difficulties in exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief.

A rights-based approach to the COVID-19 recovery and response requires recovering better and ensuring that equality and non-discrimination were ensured for children and young people, including people of African descent. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD) has underlined in its [Statement on COVID-19 and Youth](#) that it was committed to the goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the United Nations Youth Strategy. Respect for all human rights – including economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights – are fundamental to the success of public health responses and recovery from the pandemic. Such human rights based approach fulfils the objectives set forth by the 2030 Agenda and the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

- Background documents:
- [Global Survey on Youth & COVID-19: The Report and Key Findings](#), Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (DJY), OHCHR et al. (2020)
 - [Statement on COVID-10 and Youth](#), the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD) Statement on COVID-19 and Youth (2020)
 - [General Assembly resolution 75/237](#) of 31 December 2020 and [resolution 74/137](#) of 12 November 2019 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”

- [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](#)
- [General Assembly resolution 66/3](#) of 22 September 2011 entitled “United against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance” -- 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
- 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](#), [A/74/308](#) and [A/75/363](#))
- Reports 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/75/590](#) and [A/74/321](#))
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Ms. Tendayi Achiume, on racial discrimination and emerging digital technologies: a human rights analysis ([A/HRC/44/57](#))
- Reports of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent to the General Assembly and Human Rights Council ([A/75/275](#), [A/74/274](#), [A/HRC/45/44](#), [A/HRC/42/59](#), [A/HRC/39/69](#))