



High-level meeting to mark the closure of the International Decade for People of African Descent

Friday, 8 November 2024
ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York

CONCEPT NOTE

The President of the General Assembly will convene a high-level meeting to mark the closure of the International Decade for People of African Descent, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/16.¹

Background

Ten years ago, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent, to be observed from 2015 to 2024 with the theme “*People of African descent: recognition, justice and development*” ([A/RES/68/237](#)) and subsequently adopted its programme of activities ([A/RES/69/16](#)). As featured in the programme of activities, the International Decade was “a unique opportunity to underline the important contribution made by people of African descent to our societies and to propose concrete measures to promote their full inclusion and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”.

Over the past ten years, the International Decade for people of African Descent has provided a framework to foster action by States, international and regional organizations, national human rights bodies, and non-governmental organizations, including of people of African descent. As a result, several States have, for the first time, taken legislative and policy actions as well as other measures to specifically address issues faced by people of African descent.² The International Decade has also contributed to the progressive consolidation and increased visibility of an international agenda for people of African descent – with major outcomes such as the establishment of the [Permanent Forum on People of African Descent](#) in 2021. Moreover, in 2022, discussions were initiated by the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on a draft United Nations declaration on the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of people of African descent.

Yet, the commitment of States to ensure recognition, justice and development for people of African descent remains largely unfulfilled. Reports have shown that, in many countries, people of African descent continue to suffer from systemic racism, rooted in the legacies of enslavement and colonialism which prevent and hamper the realization of their human rights.

Stark socioeconomic and political marginalization continue to negatively impact the lives of people of African descent in many countries due to the persistent barriers they face in gaining equal access to quality education, employment, health care, housing, and social security

¹ [A/RES/69/16](#), para. 29 (n)

² [A/79/290](#)



amongst others. Systemic racism often leads to people of African descent suffering the consequences of racial profiling, excessive use of force, violations of basic rights during their interactions with law enforcement, as well as experiences of disproportionate or discriminatory outcomes in their access to justice and within the criminal justice system. People of African descent are also disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, lack of access to clean water, and by the discriminatory effects of new technologies, including artificial intelligence. People of African descent also suffer from multiple, aggravated or intersecting forms of discrimination based on other related grounds, such as age, sex, language, religion, political affiliation, social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

The lack of data disaggregated by race or ethnicity and by other relevant factors in many countries remains an obstacle to the development of adequate policies and measures to effectively address the structural discrimination and inequalities they face. Levels of representation and meaningful participation of people of African descent in political and public life remain low, with women particularly affected. Furthermore, no State has fully reckoned with the legacies of enslavement and colonialism, or comprehensively accounted for and repaired the harms suffered as a result, nor their continuing impacts on the lives of people of African descent today.

Recognizing that much more remains to be done to ensure that all people of African descent can fully and effectively enjoy the benefits of sustainable development and all of their human rights, the Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations anti-racism mechanisms have called on Member States to proclaim a Second International Decade for People of African Descent starting in 2025, echoing the strong calls from civil society representatives, notably people of African descent. In 2023, the General Assembly requested “the President of the General Assembly to take into consideration the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent [...] with a view to proclaiming the decade starting in 2025 the Second International Decade for People of African Descent”.³

Objectives:

The high-level meeting will be an opportunity to:

- Take stock of the progress and steps taken in the implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade during the period 2015-2024;
- Identify continuing and emerging challenges, in the protection and promotion of the human rights of people of African descent worldwide;
- Identify recommendations on further steps to be taken in order to strengthen the protection and promotion of the human rights of people of African descent globally beyond 2024, including through the proclamation of a Second International Decade for People of African Descent and strengthening the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and relevant recommendations by the

³ [A/RES/78/234](#)



Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN anti-racism mechanisms, and other relevant stakeholders.

Format and outcome

The high-level meeting will take place in-person on 8 November 2024, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. in the ECOSOC Chamber at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The high-level meeting will consist of an opening commemorative segment followed by three interactive panel discussions that will address the three areas for the implementation of the theme of the International Decade, namely recognition, justice and development. A more detailed programme will be circulated in due course.

The United Nations Webcast services will provide live streaming coverage of the high-level meeting in all 6 UN official languages as well as on-demand coverage (recorded video) in English and speaker's original language, through the UN Web TV website at: <http://webtv.un.org>.

Participation

In order to promote a constructive and inclusive dialogue, participation in the high-level meeting will be open to Member States and Observers of the General Assembly, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, as well as representatives of nongovernmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC.

Accessibility arrangements

Delegations are requested to inform the Secretariat of the accessibility requirements of their delegates in order to facilitate participation in meetings. Upon request, adjustments can be made to seating arrangements with a view to enabling the participation of persons with disabilities. For individual requests, please contact the Meetings Support Section of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (email: accessibilitycentre@un.org; phone: 212 963 7348/9) no later than three working days prior to the meeting.
