

49th session of the Human Rights Council
Debate in commemoration of the
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Theme: Voices for action against racism

Concept note (as of 8 March 2022)

- Date and venue:** **Monday, 28 March 2022, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**
Room XIX, Palais des Nations, Geneva and online platform (Zoom)
(will be broadcast live and archived on <https://media.un.org/en/webtv>)
- Objectives:** The panel discussion will gather speakers who are known for their active role in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and who are from diverse backgrounds. The panellists will discuss anti-racism policies and actions, the rise in activism and existing challenges in preventing and combatting racism. They will share their experiences on the importance of respect for the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and of protecting civic space as a means of effectively addressing racism and racial discrimination. They will also discuss the necessity of listening to those who face racial discrimination and of acting on their concerns, while ensuring their meaningful and safe participation and representation in all areas of decision-making.
- Chair:** **H.E. Mr. Federico Villegas**, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statements:** **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Poem/text read by a young poet or writer [TBC]
- Panellists:**
- **Ms. Manjusha P. Kulkarni**, Executive Director of AAPI Equity Alliance and Co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate *(video message)*
 - **Ms. Mary Kluk**, Director and Board Chairperson of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre, National Vice-President of the South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies and President of the Africa Australia Region of the World Jewish Congress *(video message)*
 - **Ms. Lúcia Xavier**, Founder and General Coordinator of Criola *(video message)*
 - **Mr. Joshua Castellino**, Executive Director of Minority Rights Group International and Professor of Law at Middlesex University, London *(video message)*
- Outcome:** The panel discussion will contribute to:
- Bolstering political will towards transformative action to address systemic racism and racial discrimination, as well as towards the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.
 - Highlighting the importance of strengthening public participation and representation at every level of decision-making processes for preventing and combatting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
 - Reaffirming the importance of full respect for the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association in the fight against all forms and manifestations of racism and racial discrimination.
 - Recognising the contribution of individuals and organizations that stand up against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the challenges they face, as well as providing recommendations for creating a conducive environment for such work.
- Mandate:** In its resolution [76/226](#), “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”, the General Assembly 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 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 (para. 46).

Format:

The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by a two-part interactive discussion and conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statement, panellists' presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States or observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions.

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. 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 call to action for human rights, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stressed that diversity was an asset, not a threat, and that every community, including minorities and indigenous peoples, should feel that its identity is respected and that it can fully participate in society as a whole. He also recognized that age, gender and diversity shape people's experiences and protection needs and must be taken into account. In his report "Our Common Agenda", the Secretary-General stressed the need for new approaches to proactively support the participation in public affairs of those who have traditionally been marginalized. This includes racial and ethnic minorities, as well as indigenous peoples.

In the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, States recognized the positive contribution that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, could make to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. On the occasion of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, Heads of State and Government affirmed their strong determination to mobilize political will and to accelerate momentum to make the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the protection of the victims thereof, a high priority.

More recently, the General Assembly, in its resolution 76/226, stressed that everyone, including people and communities of African descent, should be able to participate in an inclusive manner and guide the design and implementation of processes that contribute to halting, reversing and repairing the lasting consequences and ongoing manifestations of systemic racism, and notably acknowledged the important role that young people had played and should continue to play in these processes.

The High Commissioner highlighted the urgency of listening to people of African descent to achieve concrete results and dismantle systemic racism in her "Four-point Agenda Towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality". In its resolution 47/21, the Human Rights Council called upon all States and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that Africans and people of African descent and those who stand up against racism are protected, that their voices are heard and that their concerns are acted upon.

Background documents:

- [General Assembly resolution 76/226](#) of 24 December 2021 entitled "A global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action"
- [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#) (2001)
- [Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference](#) (2009)
- [General Assembly resolution 76/1](#) of 22 September 2021 entitled "United against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance" (Political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action)

- Report of the Secretary-General, “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](#), 2021)
- Secretary-General, [The Highest Aspiration – A Call to Action for Human Rights](#) (2020)
- United Nations Guidance Note, [Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#) (2020)
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers ([A/HRC/47/53](#) and annex entitled “Four-point Agenda towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality”), and its accompanying conference room paper ([A/HRC/47/CRP.1](#), June 2020)