UN expert criticises boycott of Durban Process, calls for urgent action against transnational racism

October 28, 2021

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27724&LangID=E>

The UN’s expert on racism has strongly criticised countries boycotting the Durban Declaration and called on them to recommit to the principles for combatting racial discrimination and intolerance agreed at the landmark World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, 20 years ago.

“The unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent reminder of how deeply entrenched racial, ethnic and national disparities remain in enjoyment of fundamental human rights,” Tendayi Achiume, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, told the General Assembly on Wednesday.

“The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), agreed two decades ago, offers a principled and practical blueprint for undoing discriminatory structures and achieving equality and justice for marginalized and exploited groups and individuals.”

She urged countries reaffirm their commitment to the transnational fight against racism as she presented to the General Assembly her [report](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/NY/GA76/A_76_434_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx) highlighting the contributions of the Durban Declaration, with recommendations for fighting intolerance and structural inequality.

“Twenty years ago, the world stood at a crossroads in Durban,” she said. “Now, despite the dedicated advocacy and grass-roots mobilization of the last two decades, the world stands at a similar crossroads. I urge UN Member States – and the entire international community – to reaffirm the commitments enshrined in the Durban Declaration and take concrete steps to realize the promise of transnational racial equality and racial justice.”

She criticised countries that announced they would not participate in a recent General Assembly commemoration of the Durban Conference and the Declaration, or in the Durban process.

“Rather than using the DDPA to fight against racism, several States have instead signalled they intend to abandon the Durban process,” Achiume said. “This group includes some of the greatest beneficiaries of colonialism, slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

“I call on States participating in any form of DDPA boycott to instead demonstrate their genuine commitment to racial justice and equality by implementing the DDPA and engaging in its follow-up mechanisms.”

ENDS

*Ms. Tendayi Achiume (Zambia) was appointed by the Human Rights Council as*[*Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance*](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/SRRacism/Pages/IndexSRRacism.aspx)*in September 2017. Special Rapporteur Achiume is the Alicia Miñana Chair in Law at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Law. She is also a research associate of the African Center for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa.*