

Racism Statement 62485

Thank you Mr. President,

It is with deep regret that we listen to Mr. Doudou Diene today, knowing that this is his last annual report to the Human Rights Council. Throughout the past six years, the Special Rapporteur has made an immense contribution to the promotion of the right to freedom from racism and racial discrimination.

The African Group welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur and fully supports the recommendations contained therein. Once more, the Rapporteur has accurately outlined the underlying challenges impeding progress in the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, and the means to overcome them, if there is a will.

The report rightly highlights the deepening and increase of the various forms and manifestations of contemporary forms of racism and their constructs, in an extremely complex and unfavorable global context.

Mr. President,

Racism is as old as mankind, and so is the lack of will to fight it. The equation is simple : when humanity summoned that will, peace and prosperity prevailed. When it failed to do so, conflict and suffering became widespread. The Rapporteur has cited the erosion of political will ^{as} the single most potent danger to combating racism. In his last comprehensive report to the Council, this stark reminder couldn't have been more timely.

The report also warns us against the looming dangers. The prevalence of racism is by far the largest threat to peace and stability within and among nations, but the political trivialization of racism is ripe in some parts of the world. Some democracies fail, just as in the early decades of the twentieth century, to stem the tide of racist and xenophobic platforms, and the alliances they forge with political parties.

Certainly, racism and democracy do not go hand in hand, and those who know history, and that history repeats itself, know all too well the price of the intellectual and scientific legitimization of racism. The reports emphasis on the situation of minorities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is most pertinent.

As the Rapporteur has often highlighted, political and legal strategies, as well and intellectual and ethical approaches, are necessary for the fight against racism, and can only complement and reinforce each other.

Mr. President,

The report before us today has again emphasized the alarming increase in instances of incitement to racial and religious hatred, and stressed the dangers associated with the practice of defamation of religions, amidst continuing denial and refusal by some states to comply with their international obligations and make such acts punishable by law. The hierarchization of human rights continue with the freedom of expression reigning supreme and trampling all other rights and considerations. This situation is unsustainable as we all know, and we that it will be addressed and redressed sooner rather than later.

The African Group fully endorses the Rapporteur's proposal to convene an international seminar addressing this subject.

Finally, the African Group supports the submission of the Special Rapporteur's present report, as well as all other previous reports, as contributions to the Prep-Com of the Durban Review Conference. His call to make this Conference a success, as a matter of necessity, is most welcome, and we would like to ask him if there are specific areas of focus that he would propose for the Durban Review Process apart from those mentioned in his report.

Mr. President,

the African Group welcomes the report of ambassador Peter Kassanda, on the eighth session on the Working Group on People of African Descent. Throughout his tenure as member and Chairperson of the Working Group, Ambassador Kassanda's contribution has been characterized by the highest-level of expertise and professionalism. As his term with the Working Group ends this year, we would like to wish him all success with his future endeavors.

The African Group fully endorses the recommendations made by the WGPAD to the Durban review process, and welcomes the discussions held at the 8th session of the Working Group, while expressing its dissatisfaction with the level of engagement demonstrated by some. The recommendations pertaining the criminalization of racial profiling, combating racism in the media, among others, should be pursued with vigor.

The report of the WG constitutes an important contribution to the Durban review process for which we thank Ambassador Kassanda and all members of the Group.

I thank you.