

Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

Introduction

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001, adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. This document records a commitment by States to work together to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It is a comprehensive and action-oriented road map, offering a functional common approach to realize the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action specify that a victim-oriented approach is an important tool to eliminate racial discrimination. Specific reference is made to Africans and people of African descent, Asians and persons of Asian descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, minorities, the Roma and others.

Paragraph 7 of the Durban Programme of Action specifically "requests the Commission on Human Rights to consider establishing a working group or other mechanism of the United Nations to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the African Diaspora and make proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent".

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent was established by Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/68 of 25 April 2002. Its mandate, spelled out in resolution 2002/68 o.p. 8 and further expanded in resolution 2003/30, o.p. 24-25 is to.

- study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the Diaspora and to this end gather all relevant information from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other relevant sources, including through holding public meetings with them;
- propose measures to ensure full and effective access to the justice system by people of African descent,
- submit recommendations on the design, implementation and enforcement of effective measures to eliminate racial profiling of people of African descent;
- elaborate short, medium and long-term proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent, bearing in mind the need for close collaboration with international and development institutions and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to promote the human rights of people of African descent, inter alia through:
 - (i) Improving the human rights situation of people of African descent by devoting special attention to their needs, inter alia through the preparation of specific programmes of action;
 - (ii) Designing special projects, in collaboration with people of African descent, to support their initiatives at the community level and to facilitate

- the exchange of information and technical know-how between these populations and experts in these areas;
 - (iii) Developing programmes intended for people of African descent allocating additional investments to health systems, education, housing, electricity, drinking water and environmental
- control measures and promoting equal opportunities in employment, as well as other affirmative or positive action initiatives, within the human rights framework;
- make proposals on the elimination of racial discrimination against Africans and people of African descent in all parts of the world;
- address all the issues concerning the well-being of Africans and people of African descent contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

In 2008, the Working Group's mandate was extended for a further three years by Human Rights Council resolution 9/14 which also entrusted it:

(a) To study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the diaspora and, to that end, gather all relevant information from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other relevant sources, including through the holding of public meetings with them;

(b) To propose measures to ensure full and effective access to the justice system by people of African descent;

(c) To submit recommendations on the design, implementation and enforcement of effective measures to eliminate racial profiling of people of African descent;

(d) To make proposals on the elimination of racial discrimination against Africans and people of African descent in all parts of the world;

(e) To address all the issues concerning the well-being of Africans and people of African descent contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

(f) To elaborate short-, medium- and long-term proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent, bearing in mind the need for close collaboration with international and development institutions and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to promote the human rights of people of African descent through, inter alia, the following activities:

(i) Improving the human rights situation of people of African descent by devoting special attention to their needs through, inter alia, the preparation of specific programmes of action;

(ii) Designing special projects, in collaboration with people of African descent, to support their initiatives at the community level and to facilitate the exchange of information and technical know-how between these populations and experts in these areas;

(iii) Liaising with financial and developmental institutional and operational programmes

and specialized agencies of the United Nations, with a view to contribute to the development programmes intended for people of African descent by allocating additional investments to health systems, education, housing, electricity, drinking water and environmental control measures and promoting equal opportunities in employment, as well as other affirmative or positive measures and strategies within the human rights framework;

In the discharge of the functions entrusted to it:

(a) The Working Group holds a 5-day session every year. At its first session, the Working Group decided to organize its work on a thematic basis. In this regard, the Group has thus far examined the themes of administration of justice, the media, access to education, racism and employment, racism and health, and racism and housing vis-à-vis people of African descent

(b) The Working Group conducts country visits upon the invitation of the Government, in order to facilitate in-depth understanding of the situation of people of African descent in various regions of the world. (E/CN.4/2005/21 par. 98).

(c) The Working Group submits a report of the annual session to the Human Rights Council, presenting its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The members of the Working Group, appointed on the basis of equitable geographic representation, are:

- Ms. Mirjana Najcevska (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) (Acting Chair)
- Mr. Linos-Alexander Sicilianos (Greece)
- Ms. Maya Sahli (Algeria)
- Ms. Monorama Biswas (Bangladesh)
- Ms. Verene Shepherd (Jamaica)