



General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 September 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-seventh session

9 September–9 October 2024

Agenda item 9

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Promoting Inclusivity and Cultural Change: Toward a Comprehensive Declaration on Diversity

As we suggested in Durban 2001 and we continue to do so, an end to racism cannot be achieved simply through human rights mechanisms, legal protections and enforcement systems. There is a need to compliment this with cultural change by making people comfortable with diversity, so that racism, xenophobia and related forms of discrimination, including cultural, lifestyles, gender, disability and belief can be left in the colonial history where much of these began. We propose a Declaration on Diversity as a set of positive action plan

Discrimination is a conduct borne from attitudes, false beliefs and often fear of the other or even when societies become insular and draw invisible boundaries.

They can be overcome with changing attitudes and removing mental boundaries. Attitudes cannot simply be legislated away nor cultural habits be eliminated by human rights regimes of people's personal beliefs do not change.

It is important that the human rights approach is accompanied with positive action to influence behaviour and attitudes with action plans that encourage greater inclusivity, greater interactions and greater understanding of human diversity.

Taking positive actions to reduce discriminations is also part of human rights and forms part of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. For instance

Article 6 of the Declaration

We further affirm that all peoples and individuals constitute one human family, rich in diversity. They have all contributed to the progress of civilisations and cultures that form the common heritage of humanity. Preservation and promotion of tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity can produce more inclusive societies.

117. We also recognize that promoting greater respect and trust among different groups within society must be a shared but differentiated responsibility of government institutions, political leaders, grass-roots organizations and citizens. We underline that civil society plays an important role in promoting the public interest, especially in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

In the Programme of Action

99. Recognizes that combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a primary responsibility of States. It therefore encourages States to develop or elaborate national action plans to promote diversity, equality, equity, social justice, equality of opportunity and the participation of all. Through, among other things, affirmative or positive actions and strategies, these plans should aim at creating conditions for all to participate effectively in decision-making and realize civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights in all spheres of life on the basis of non-discrimination. The World Conference encourages States, in developing and elaborating such action plans, to establish, or reinforce, dialogue with non-governmental organizations in order to involve them more closely in designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes;

Sikh Human Rights Group believes that these articles of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action call for a new Declaration of intent that can influence State policies at national and regional level.

A Declaration on Diversity will inspire positive action and States to learn from best practices. As a non binding Declaration, States can chose and progress as convenient.

A Declaration on Diversity is different than Declaration of Cultural Diversity as it is more comprehensive and wider incorporating all forms of diversity.