

Cross-Regional Joint Statement on Racism
46th General Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 9 General Debate

Madame President, I have the honor to deliver this cross-regional statement on behalf of more than 150 states.*

Countering racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, and tackling racial inequality, are challenges faced by every State, which can be overcome through solidarity and cooperation.

The ongoing pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many longstanding inequities. As protests have reminded us, the pursuit of racial justice and equality demands vigilance, not complacency. As Nelson Mandela urged in his 1994 address to the General Assembly, *“The very fact that racism degrades both the perpetrator and the victim commands that, if we are true to our commitment to protect human dignity, we fight on until victory is achieved.”*

Combatting racism and racial discrimination means acknowledging and addressing the legacy of past transgressions, which often manifest themselves in systemic racism. In many cases, it means actively reviewing and revising long-standing practices and policies to ensure they treat all individuals equally. It requires a proactive, systematic approach to embedding fairness and inclusivity in decision-making processes, and redressing inequities in policies that serve as barriers to equal opportunity. It means eliminating barriers to political participation and, in doing so, strengthening the foundations of democracy.

We welcome the efforts of UN entities, such as the special procedures, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and OHCHR, to address the issue of racism and racial discrimination, including police brutality against Africans, people of African descent, and persons belonging to other marginalized populations, as well as the effects of racial discrimination in propagating inequality. We also welcome the High Commissioner’s statement that the implementation of HRC 43/1 will reflect and amplify the voices of victims, their families, and communities.

Recalling the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, we are committed to working within our nations and with the international community to address and combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, while upholding freedom of expression. Moreover, we call upon all states to ratify and fully implement the ICERD.

A great deal more needs to be done; many of our own countries suffer from historical inequities that, decades and even centuries later, still cast long shadows over the present day. But we believe that with resolve and cooperation, we can make a lasting difference globally.

*To be uploaded on HRC Extranet