

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)
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World Conference Against Racism: "United To Combat Racism"

The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) was held in Durban (South Africa) from 31 August to 8 September 2001 and brought together more than 2,300 government representatives from over 160 countries, including 16 Heads of State, 58 foreign and 44 other ministers.

The World Conference was organized by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Some 3,000 accredited NGO representatives went to Durban to tell the world about their struggles and the injustice suffered by their constituencies. Over 1,000 accredited media representatives were present to cover the Conference, which was preceded by a Youth Summit from 26-27 August and an NGO Forum from 28 August to 1 September in the same city.

In opening the World Conference, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledged the symbolic significance of holding the World Conference in post-apartheid South Africa. "Who better to teach the international community to overcome racism, discrimination and intolerance than the people of South Africa?" he asked. South African President Thabo Mbeki said that the many people of the world struggling against indignity and humiliation because they were not white expected the outcome of the World Conference to signify a sustained global drive to help rid them of their suffering. South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, President of the Conference, added that there should be a sustained Programme of Action that all countries could implement at every level.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, Secretary-General of the Conference, said the journey to Durban had helped shape thinking on how to identify the victims of racism and discrimination, on the sorts of remedies that could be made available, and on the best preventive measures.

During the WCAR, intensive deliberations often continued until the early hours of the morning and were finally extended by an extra day so that on 8 September the Conference was able to adopt a Declaration and a Programme of Action that commits Member States to undertake a wide range of measures to combat racism and discrimination at the international, regional and national levels. The negotiations were undertaken by a Drafting Committee split into two Working Groups, as had been the case during the last two sessions of

the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) in Geneva. Working Group I, chaired by Marc Bossuyt (Belgium), dealt with the draft Declaration, whereas Working Group II, chaired by Bonaventura M. Bowa (Zambia), focused on the draft Programme of Action.

Delegates at the WCAR and participants at the NGO Forum both faced the challenging task of reconciling a large number of politically sensitive issues concerning racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and agreeing consensus language for their respective Declarations and Programmes of Action. Governments negotiated in the presence of a very vocal and active gathering of people who had personally suffered from racism and injustice and who did not hesitate to remind delegates about the urgency of the issues under discussion. After long negotiations and considerable bargaining over positions on the different issues, the Conference was able to agree on text that addresses the plight of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and that identifies slavery and the slave trade as a "crime against humanity." The Conference also identified a number of victim groups that suffer from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which includes: Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, women, children, Roma/Gypsies/Sinti/Travellers, and people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

IMPORTANT ISSUES UNDER DISCUSSION

Withdrawal of USA and Israel

One of the most prominent themes throughout the plenary debate at the Conference was the escalating conflict and violence between Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. At the third and last meeting of the PrepCom, held in Geneva from 30 July to 10 August 2001, Israel and the United States had already threatened to withdraw from the WCAR process if a reference to "racial discrimination against the Palestinians and the other inhabitants of the Arab territories occupied by Israel," supported by the 56-country Organization of Islamic and Arab Countries, was not removed from the text.

As was the case during the year-long conference preparatory process, intensive discussions—mostly behind closed doors in 'informal informal'—meetings were undertaken between the

major players, the United States and Israel on the one hand, and Arab countries on the other.

On the fourth day of the WCAR the United States and Israel withdrew their delegations from the Conference in response to the failure to reach consensus over language in the draft documents referring to Israeli policies towards Palestinians. In a statement US Secretary of State Colin Powell said that "with regret" he had instructed the American delegation to return home. Mr. Powell said that he had concluded that a Conference condoning "hateful language, that singles out Israel for abuse" could not be successful. With discussions deadlocked, the European Union (EU) warned that its 15 Member States, as well as the States associated with the EU, were also considering withdrawing. On 6 September, Louis Michel, Belgian Foreign Minister and acting President of the EU, said that the EU would not leave the Conference and was committed to continuing the discussions in Durban.

In the final days of the Conference, delegates were at last able to agree language which called for the end of violence and the swift resumption of peace negotiations; respect for international human rights and humanitarian law; and respect for the principle of self-determination and the end of all suffering, thus allowing Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom. Expressing concern about the plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation, the Conference, through its Declaration, recognizes the inalienable right of the

VOICES OF VICTIMS

During each day of the World Conference, victims of racial discrimination gave moving testimonies of their experiences in a special Voices of Victims Forum.

Jeanette Paillan, a Mapuche woman from Chile, Monica Morgan, an Aboriginal from Australia, and Stephanus Djuweng, a Dayak from Indonesia, gave voice to the right of indigenous peoples to their native lands and the necessity to empower themselves in the face of globalization.

Mariama Oumarou, a 17-year old, dark-skinned Tuareg from Niger, spoke about the right not to be subjected to slavery and sexual servitude. She grew up as a slave to lighter-skinned Tuaregs, just like her mother and grandmother, and was lucky enough to escape with the help of a local NGO.

Murugesan Manimegalai addressed the oppression caused by caste systems and the brutality inherent in these systems. After Murugesan's husband, a Dalit, was chosen President of the Village Council, he was murdered by upper caste men.

Immaculée Mukamuhirwa (Tutsi) and her husband François-Xavier Nsanzuvera (Hutu) spoke of the genocide that occurred in Rwanda against Tutsis and moderate Hutus, and the racial discrimination that remains in the country to this day.

Nusreta Sivic, a Muslim lawyer, gave voice to the right to be free from rape, sexual brutality and the horrors brought about by ethnic cleansing. Nusreta survived the Omarska concentration camp in northern Bosnia after months of sexual violence on the basis of racial discrimination.

Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State. It also recognizes the right to security for all States in the region, including Israel, and called upon all States to support the peace process and bring it to an early conclusion.

Slavery and the Slave Trade

Another important theme that had already provoked intense discussions during previous PrepComs was the recognition of colonialism, slavery and the slave trade as major sources and forms of racism and racial discrimination, and the view held by most African countries that countries that participated in and benefited from these practices should acknowledge the misdeeds of the past and express a formal apology. A significant number of African countries also pressed for reparations for these practices. The dominance of the issue of reparations at the Conference was somewhat surprising, as a consensus was believed to have been reached at the third session of the PrepCom.

After intensive negotiations, 'informal informal' meetings and bargaining sessions, States were able to agree upon a Declaration in which they acknowledged that "slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity." States also agreed that "the slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should have always been so" and expressed "regret for the massive human sufferings caused by slavery [and] the transatlantic slave trade." This text falls short of the formal apology that several African countries had asked for. Instead, the Conference "[invited] the international community to honour the memory of the victims of these tragedies," noted that "some States have taken the initiative of regretting or expressing remorse or presenting apologies," and "called upon those who have not yet contributed to restoring the dignity of the victims to find appropriate ways to do so."

Several African leaders and NGOs blamed slavery, the slave trade and colonialism for the current underdevelopment in Africa and elsewhere, but the final Declaration did not go further than expressing "regret that the effects and persistence of these structures and practices have been among the factors contributing to lasting social and economic inequalities in many parts of the world today."

Regarding compensation and reparations by so-called "concerned States" for slavery and the slave trade, a number of speakers suggested that reparations did not necessarily have to come in the form of payments to individuals, and instead referred to the New African Initiative, which envisages a united Africa with the support of the international community. In its final Declaration, the Conference called on developing countries and the United Nations system to support the New African Initiative and other innovative mechanisms, such as the World Solidarity Fund for the Eradication of Poverty.

Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

Migrants and refugees were among the victim groups that made considerable gains at the WCAR in terms of the language of the final Declaration and Programme of Action. The Declaration recognizes "the positive economic, social and cultural contributions made by migrants to both countries of origin and destination" and states that "xenophobia against non-nationals, particularly migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, constitutes one of the main sources of contemporary racism." It "strongly condemns" acts of racism against migrants and reaffirms "the responsibility of States to protect the human rights of migrants and to safeguard and protect"

them against racist attacks. It calls upon States to facilitate family reunification and underlines its positive effect on the integration of migrants.

The Programme of Action urges States "to review or to revise any immigration policies which are inconsistent with international human rights instruments." It also urges States to take concrete measures to eliminate racism against migrant workers in the workplace, to ensure respect of labour rights, access to social security and health, education and housing services, and to ensure their fair treatment and legal protection. In addition, the Programme of Action urges States to implement laws and policies that protect migrant women and children from domestic violence and to implement effective legislation that protects vulnerable groups of migrant workers, especially trafficked persons, smuggled migrants and domestic workers. With regard to follow-up, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is called upon to combat discrimination against migrant workers.

One of the more controversial refugee-related issues was whether or not the outcome document should make reference to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Several States not party to the widely ratified Convention made strong objections to such a reference, but their efforts were in vain. The Programme of Action says that "State Parties should ensure that all measures relating to refugees must be in full accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol." One of the gains with respect to internally displaced persons was the inclusion of a paragraph in the Programme of Action on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, encouraging States to promote and make use of these Principles. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were issued by Francis Deng, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, and adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 1998.

NGO activities on these issues were organized through the Migration, Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Internally Displaced Persons Caucus, where NGO representatives shared experiences, coordinated lobbying activities and began preparing for follow-up activities to the World Conference. The Caucus was established early on in the conference preparatory process by migrants' rights organizations as a Migration Caucus, and was considered to be one of the more active and effective caucuses. NGOs participating in the Caucus suggested and drafted language of a number of paragraphs of the WCAR texts, of which a considerable amount has been adopted in the final WCAR Declaration and Programme of Action.

Discrimination on the Basis of Caste

The issue of caste-based discrimination or discrimination based on descent became highly visible during the World Conference. A delegation of around 160 representatives of Dalits, so-called 'untouchables,' from India, tirelessly and eloquently drew attention in the different forums to the discrimination and exploitation on the basis of descent experienced by hundreds of millions of Dalits in South Asia, Burakumin in Japan, Osu in Nigeria and other groups in Senegal and Southern Mauritania. Apart from raising awareness of a struggle unknown to many, their efforts were directed towards keeping a much disputed paragraph relating to discrimination based on work and descent in the WCAR Programme of Action. This particular paragraph read: "To ensure that all necessary constitutional, legislative and administrative measures including appropriate forms of affirmative action are in place to prohibit and redress discrimination on the basis of work and descent, and that such measures are respected and implemented by all States authorities at all levels." Neither

demonstrations nor a hunger strike of Dalit representatives could prevent the intensive lobbying by one of the States concerned to succeed in removing the reference to discrimination based on descent from the final texts. Ramesh Nathan of the New Entity for Social Action (India) said that, despite this, he was happy about the visibility that the Dalit issue had received in Durban. "After this Conference we are going to continue the follow-up action in order to pressurize our own

IMPACT OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Several seminars held in parallel to the World Conference addressed the issue of multiple forms of discrimination faced by women. At a roundtable organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Gay McDougall, member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, recalled the controversy of the issue at the Beijing Conference and considered it "Beijing's unfinished business." While at that conference the tendency had been to keep gender and racism "on two separate tracks," in the years after Beijing, gender and human rights groups as well as UN human rights bodies have recognized the need to link the two issues and look at how women's enjoyment of their rights is affected by issues of race, Ms. McDougall said. Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Special Rapporteur on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, pointed to the triple discrimination faced by women in armed conflict, the criminal justice system and trafficking schemes, often because they are marginalized and/or coming from ethnic or national minorities. She recommended that the WCAR Declaration contain a paragraph on data collection regarding race and gender, and an obligation to train members of the police, the criminal justice system and health workers about the intersection between gender and race. Gabriela Rodriguez Pizarro, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, pointed to the particular vulnerability of female migrant workers to racial discrimination, and called for the WCAR outcome document to contain a reference to protecting their rights. This suggestion was realized. Mary Robinson stressed the importance of integrating a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination. She took the opportunity to launch a new publication by her office, Gender Dimensions of Racial Discrimination, which examines discrimination against women in the labour market, health care, armed conflict, criminal justice systems and other areas, and which also reviews current government and UN practices to combat gender and racial discrimination.

At another seminar on the topic, indigenous women from communities in Colombia, Canada, Sudan, Hawaii, Japan and Argentina spoke about the specific impact on indigenous women of the environmental racism of multinational corporations, institutionalized racism in schools, the criminal justice system and the health sector, as well as in the employment sector. One of the panellists, an indigenous woman lawyer from Hawaii, asked the audience why the rights of 400 million indigenous women are not respected when human rights are to be universal. She called on indigenous women to commit to forming partnerships with other women.

government to take proper measures to implement the laws that already exist, until we get our justice."

Gender and Racism

Another issue that was at the centre of the debate in Durban was the inter-linkage between gender and racism, or the 'multiple discrimination' experienced by women around the world because they are black, foreign, of an ethnic or religious minority and/or poor. The first time that the intersection between gender and racism was recognized at a major UN conference was during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing (China) in 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognized that "many women face additional barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or socio-economic class or because they are indigenous people, migrants, displaced or refugees."

The Durban Conference recognized the relationship between racism and gender and the need to take actions to combat its manifestations. Paragraph 67 of the WCAR Declaration reads: "We are convinced that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reveal themselves in a different manner for women and girls, and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination and the limitation or denial of their human rights" and "we recognize the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies."

Indigenous Peoples

A large number of representatives from indigenous peoples were present in Durban to discuss the particular discrimination faced by their communities. Questions of self-determination, ownership of native lands and natural resources, intellectual property rights over their traditional medicines and the plants used for their creation, and protection of their indigenous cultural heritage were among the issues high on their agenda. During the preparatory process leading up to Durban they had already worked hard in the Indigenous Caucus to ensure the WCAR draft documents contained language that unconditionally respected their rights and livelihoods. The indigenous community was in great commotion after the insertion into the draft WCAR Declaration, at the third PrepCom, of a number of paragraphs that they found controversial. To the disappointment of the indigenous NGO community, intense lobbying at the WCAR only brought about a slight last-minute amendment to one of the paragraphs.

The final Declaration contains a number of paragraphs relating to the rights of indigenous peoples and the particular discrimination they face. It recognizes the "value and diversity of the cultures and heritage of the indigenous peoples," whose "contribution" and "participation" to society are "fundamental for political and social stability." It also stresses the full and equal enjoyment by indigenous peoples of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the benefits of sustainable development, while fully reflecting their distinctive characteristics and their own initiatives. However, some paragraphs in the Declaration considerably limit the scope of these words. An indigenous woman lawyer and activist from Hawaii pointed in particular to paragraphs 23, 24 and 42 of the WCAR Declaration. Paragraph 23 reads: "We fully recognize the rights of indigenous peoples consistent with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States." Paragraph 24 says that "the use of the term 'indigenous peoples' in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the [WCAR] is in the context of, and without the prejudice to

the outcome of, ongoing international negotiations on texts that specifically deal with this issue, and cannot be construed as having any implications as to rights under international law." Lastly, paragraph 51 leaves States much room for manoeuvre: while it recognizes the "special relationship that indigenous peoples have with the land as basis for their spiritual, physical and cultural existence," it "encourage[s] States, wherever possible, to ensure that indigenous peoples are able to retain ownership of their lands and of those natural resources to which they are entitled under domestic law."

NGO FORUM AND NGO DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Representatives of Roma, Gypsies, Dalits, Kurds, Tamils, Tibetans, African Brazilians, Jews, Palestinians, native Americans and Australian Aborigines, and many other victim groups were present in Durban to get their message across amidst the hundreds of voices at the NGO Forum that preceded the World Conference. The Forum was organized by the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) at the Kingsmead Cricket Stadium in Durban, which, for the duration of the Forum, was transformed into a small village of white tents. Here representatives from victims groups and grassroots organizations joined national, regional and international NGOs to discuss a range of issues related to racial discrimination and xenophobia, from the concerns of migrants, to compensation for the slave trade, to trafficking of persons. They sat together and shared experiences, learned about each other's struggles, debated intensely, demonstrated, danced and brainstormed together until very late at night. The large media contingent recorded their experience of daily struggles back home.

At the 'tent village' a wide variety of meetings were organized for NGO participants to discuss root causes and manifestations of different forms of racism and intolerance, as well as best practices and strategies to overcome them. Panel discussions aimed to tackle broader issues such as colonialism, institutionalized racism, self-determination and the effects of globalization. Thematic commissions focused on different groups of victims and worked on language for the final NGO Declaration and Programme of Action.

As had been the case during the preparatory process, most of the drafting work was undertaken by caucuses, with an estimated 40 caucuses active in Durban. Some were regional such as the Americas, Asia Pacific, Africa, Arab-Middle East, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America; some were country-specific such as the United States, South Africa; some were constituency-specific such as Africans and Afro-descendants, Asian and Asian descendants, Dalits, Ecumenical, Girl Child, Indigenous, Indigenous Women, International NGOs, Jewish, Kurdish, Palestinians, Roma, Women, Youth; and yet others were issue-specific such as Criminal Justice, Cultural Diversity, Disability, Education, Environmental Racism, Health and Racism, HIV/AIDS, Labour, Media, Migration, Poverty and Racism, Religious and Spiritual, Reparations, Sexual Diversity, and Trafficking. If participants still had the energy, they could choose from dozens of workshops organized by NGOs each day on a wide variety of issues related to conference themes.

The NGO Declaration and Programme of Action that resulted from the NGO Forum was a courageous attempt to unite the voices and battles of all victim groups into one document. It was not an easy task. The 80-page NGO document discusses the discrimination faced by a large number of groups in a more comprehensive manner than the official Conference

texts. It not only mentions the transatlantic slave trade, but also addresses the contemporary phenomenon of trafficking of men, women and children for forced labour, enslavement and sexual exploitation in a number of African countries. It condemns anti-Semitism as one of the oldest, most pernicious and prevalent forms of racism. The Declaration expresses concern over the discrimination faced by African and Asian descendants, especially women. It condemns the various manifestations of caste-based discrimination, including "devadasi" or the practice of temple prostitution of Dalit women and girls in India, and the work and descent-based discrimination against the Buraku people of Japan. The Declaration expresses its solidarity with the struggles for self-determination of marginalized or minority groups, specifically mentioning Palestinians, Kurds, Tibetans and Bhutanese, as well as gays and lesbians, and condemns hate crimes against these groups. The NGO texts also address environmental racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system.

Even though the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action contain strong and innovative language on a number of themes, including hate crimes, criminal justice, migrants, Dalits, and Roma/Gypsies/Sinti/Travellers, it failed to garner the support of all NGO participants. Around one hundred NGOs, including organizations gathered in the Jewish Caucus, the Eastern and Central European Caucus and a number of international and European NGOs, expressed reservations on the document. In particular, the references in paragraphs 418 and 419 of the NGO Programme of Action to "the institutionalized racism and Apartheid regime in Israel," the description of Israeli practices against Palestinians as "war crimes, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing" and equating these practices with "crimes against humanity" were the subject of intense disagreements among NGOs. Other strong differences of opinion over the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action related to the shortening of the chapter on Anti-Semitism, a reference to "the racial aspect of globalization" and language pertaining to reparations for the transatlantic slave trade. According to the joint statement endorsed by more than 50 mostly Central and Eastern European NGOs, "the language of the chapter 'Palestine' as well as the deliberate distortions made to the chapter 'Anti-Semitism' is extremely intolerant, disrespectful and contrary to the very spirit of the World Conference." Yet while many other NGOs were unhappy with some of the wording, they accepted the NGO document out of a sense of mutual respect for different opinions and for the positive language in other parts of the document.

On 7 September, Mary Robinson addressed a large NGO audience to discuss the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action. She praised the "rich, good things in the document, particularly in the Preamble, which is better than what it is in the governmental document," and commended the paragraphs on Caste, Hate Crimes and Criminal Justice. However, she also expressed reservations on the document. "Some paragraphs are very unhelpful," she said, particularly referring to paragraphs 418 and 419 of the NGO Programme of Action, which evoke a 1975 UN Security Council Resolution (3379) equating Zionism with racism, and which compare Israeli policies with acts of genocide. "I understand the depth of passion," she said, [but] "it is inappropriate to have these paragraphs in this document." Therefore, to the disappointment of many NGOs, the High Commissioner could not recommend the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action to the government delegates. Focusing on the follow-up to Durban, she expressed the hope that the voices expressed in Durban would provide the basis for a global alliance against racism.

THE YOUTH SUMMIT

An international Youth Summit, bringing together more than 700 youth from all regions of the world as well as diverse cultural, religious and political backgrounds, preceded the NGO Forum and the WCAR on 26-27 August 2001. In caucuses and working groups, young women and men discussed issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances as they impacted specifically on children and young people, and identified ways in which youth could contribute to efforts to combat their causes and manifestations. In preparation for the Youth Summit, youth conferences had been organized at the regional level in Chile, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Rwanda. At the sub-regional level, NGOs had organized youth workshops against racism in Azerbaijan and Bahrain, and national youth consultations on racism had been held in South Africa, the Philippines, Australia, Canada and Peru.

While the Youth Summit ended on 27 August, the drafting process, undertaken by an international youth drafting team of representatives from the International Youth Committee and the South African Youth Task Team, continued throughout the duration of the NGO Forum and the WCAR. On 4 September 2001 the Durban Youth Declaration and Plan of Action, entitled "United To Combat Racism—A Youth Vision!" were adopted by 40 representatives of the Youth Drafting Committee and the International Youth Committee and South African Youth Task Team representatives, organizers of the Youth Summit.

The Youth Declaration emphasizes the "key role that young people around the world play in the struggle to eradicate racism...through community and national based programmes and projects." It addresses, among other things, racism directed at HIV/AIDS infected youth, racism in the education system, and racial discrimination against young people from indigenous communities and national minorities. The Youth Plan of Action addresses racial discrimination in the following fields: minority rights; colonialism/foreign occupation; justice; health and the environment; education/media/information technologies; globalization; young women and multiple forms of discrimination; and slavery/reparations.

At the closing session of the Youth Summit, Mary Robinson commended the commitment and dedication of the young people in the preparatory phase and the efforts of those present in Durban to tackle issues of racism that affect them. "Young people can bring special insights to bear on the issues facing the World Conference, because they are particularly vulnerable to conflict and discrimination," she told the large gathering of young people. Focusing on the follow-up to Durban, she encouraged young people to spread their wings and build a global network of youth organizations and leaders committed to fighting racism, to engage in an open and frank dialogue about racism, and to take initiatives at the local level wherever they encountered racism.

DURBAN AND BEYOND

In her closing statement to the Conference, Mary Robinson stressed that Durban was to be a beginning and not an end. "There must be follow-up," she declared. She had previously urged participants in the Conference to take a pragmatic approach and had expressed her hope that Durban not remain "a Conference of words and promises" but "a real breakthrough in attitudes and strategies to combat racism."

One of the follow-up initiatives she announced in Durban was the setting up, in her Office, of an Anti-Discrimination Unit.

The Programme of Action includes provisions for follow-up mechanisms. It includes a call on States to provide the OHCHR with national action plans and other relevant materials on the measures undertaken in order to implement the WCAR outcome document. It proposes the appointment, by the UN Secretary-General, of a five-expert body representing all regions, to follow the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action. The expert body would provide annual progress reports to the UN Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly. The Programme of Action welcomes the creation of an Anti-Discrimination Unit in the OHCHR, and invites the High Commissioner to consider the inclusion in its mandate of the provision of legal and administrative support and advice to victims of racial discrimination, as well as the collection of background materials provided by States, NGOs and national human rights institutions. The Programme of Action further recommends the creation of a comprehensive database containing information on practical means to address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including anti-discrimination legislation, as well as legal means to combat racial discrimination. It would also provide information on remedies available through international mechanisms, opportunities for technical cooperation and academic studies and specialized documentation. The database should be accessible to those in authority and to the public at large, as stated in the draft Programme of Action.

With regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action, the document mentions a number of additional follow-up initiatives. Stressing the importance of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Programme of Action requests "adequate resources" for the Committee, encourages the OHCHR to raise awareness of the Committee, and sets the goal for universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the year 2005. The United Nations is called upon to develop capacity-building programmes for Africans and people of African descent in the Americas and around the world, and to develop cultural and educational programmes aimed at countering racism. It also urges the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to cooperate with States in the preparation of teaching materials and tools. The Programme of Action also recommends that the General Assembly consider declaring a United Nations year or decade against trafficking in persons.

Recognizing the important role NGOs should play in the follow-up process of World Conferences, the Programme of Action urges States to "enable NGOs to function freely and openly within their societies and thereby make an effective contribution to the elimination of racism" [and] "to establish and strengthen effective partnerships with...all relevant actors of civil society, including NGOs working to promote gender equality." The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is invited to undertake regular consultations with

NGOs and to encourage research activities aimed at collecting, maintaining and adapting the technical, scientific and information materials produced by all cultures around the world to fight racism.

Many NGOs are actively committed to participating in and monitoring the Conference follow-up, and have begun to develop their own initiatives. Through the networks that were established in Durban they will continue to exchange ideas and best practices, and coordinate activities. One immediate focus of attention is lobbying for the adoption of a draft Resolution on follow-up to the World Conference, tabled by South Africa in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs. The draft resolution addresses issues ranging from the budget to the mandate of the new Anti-Discrimination Unit in the Office of the High Commissioner. One of the issues still under discussion is whether or not the World Conference should have a "plus-5" review format since, unlike the outcome documents of other World Conferences, the WCAR Programme of Action does not mention a review meeting in five or ten years.

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Outcome documents and other information on the World Conference, the Youth Summit and the NGO Forum can be found online at (www.icare.to), (www.racism.org.za) and (www.unrisd.org/racism/abstracts.htm).

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