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

Joint written statement* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, Interfaith International, Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme, non-governmental organizations 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.

[11 February 2024]

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



Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Commemoration of International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination is an important yearly milestone on taking stock of how far Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is progressing.

We also welcome the renewed mandate of the InterGovernmental Working Group on Effective Implementation of the Durban declaration and Programme of Action. It is encouraging that the issue of racism is taken seriously at the Human Rights Council. While eagerly waiting for the report, we submit this joint statement on alternative approaches to tackle racism and related intolerance.

The backbone of universal values are inspired by the principles of diversity, which are the essential underlaying foundation of the elimination of intolerance and racial discrimination in our contemporary society. Racism is the result of widespread hate. It is not so much of a legal issue. The law can punish perpetrators and introduce policies that lessen its manifestation. But it cannot entirely change attitudes and prejudices that lead to racism.

Despite what has been said, it appears important to underline that IGWG's recommendations on legal and policy approaches States can take to reduce racism are both welcome and necessary. We have also been suggesting positive programmes to change attitudes and behaviours regarding racial discrimination.

We are of the opinion that if Governments were to introduce policies and promote programmes that promote diversity as a natural and desirable aspect of life, people's fear of the other, or concepts of superiority, will begin to dissipate. Hence we have been proposing a UN Declaration on Diversity that goes beyond the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity. It shall complement the Durban Declaration. In fact it would lead towards the realisation the Durban Declaration through positive action.

By making society comfortable with diversity, a great deal of the underlying prejudices, opinions and fears that lead to racism will lose their foundation. The acceptance and promotion of diversity, rather than tolerance of diversity, has worked in many civilisations and subsequently in the nations that are dominated by these civilisations. If States were to look at successful positive action taken by other States and implement them in accordance with their own unique cultural and political constitution, they will find dealing with racism a lot easier.

If attitudes change, then the force of the law and policies banning discrimination on basis of race may not even need implementing. We strongly urge the IGWG to look at the option of a UN Declaration on Diversity and add this in its repertoire of proposals.

Africa Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHS), NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.