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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

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.

[1 June 2026]

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

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Reaffirming Durban at 25: From Tolerance to a Culture of Diversity

The Sikh Human Rights Group welcomes the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and is looking forward in engaging with the reports A/HRC/62/55 and A/HRC/62/55/Add.1 of the mandate holder, Ashwini K.P.

This year, 2026, marks the 25th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and the Programme of Action, which has remained the most comprehensive framework guiding the global efforts for pluralistic understanding of diversity. The Sikh Human Rights Group actively participated in the process leading to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance through the organisation of workshops and seminars, composition and reading of statements to the UN assembly, publication of position papers and constructive dialogue with government delegates and NGOs. We contributed substantially to the language of the outcome document and have been championing the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action for a quarter century through a Declaration on Diversity and a UN Day of Diversity.

We believe that the struggle against racism must not remain confined to legal measures alone, but must also confront the deeper cultural and institutional patterns that allow prejudice to persist.

Racism is not only expressed through open hatred or discriminatory laws, it also survives through stereotypes, exclusionary narratives, institutional habits, and the quiet pressure to conform to a single homogenous identity. The Sikh Human Rights Group has long maintained that culture, worldview, outlook physical form are inseparable from social identity and self confidence. However discrimination often targets people not only because of colour or descent or physical form, but because of language, appearance, customs, dress, belief, or a distinct way of life.

At a time when minorities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and culturally distinct communities continue to face pressure, the international community should reaffirm that diversity is not a threat but a source of social strength. The experience of the Durban process shows that societies can progress when they move beyond mere “tolerance” toward active respect for human dignity and equal participation.

We therefore believe that States should invest not only in anti-discrimination laws, but also in positive policies that make diversity normal, visible, and valued in everyday life. This includes education, public awareness, community dialogue, and institutional reform so that the respect for diversity is embedded in the culture of the people, and can be maintained with or without legal and judicial intervention.

We therefore call on the Special Rapporteur to continue highlighting the need for States to identify and address discrimination in education, policing, media, employment, immigration, and public services. Particular attention should be paid to those communities whose cultural practices are too often misread as “otherness” and whose rights are not fully protected by fragmented legal categories.

We also stress that the fight against racism requires cooperation with civil society, because NGOs and affected communities remain essential partners in identifying abuse, documenting patterns of exclusion, and designing workable solutions.

We further believe that our proposal for a Declaration on Diversity. We believe that this will encourage States to promote a culture of diversity within their countries. States can also learn from best practices.

The Durban Declaration remains a living promise, but it will only be fully realized if States move from adoption to implementation, and from passive tolerance to active inclusion. A world that respects diversity at its core will be better equipped to resist racism, safeguard equality, and build genuine social cohesion.