

The Durban Conference: The dozen first steps we should take

1 Recognise what happened

The slave trade was an appalling tragedy. Africans, Asians and indigenous peoples continue to be victims of their consequences. Also, the Holocaust must never be forgotten. We should honour the memory of victims of past tragedies (slavery, slave trade, transatlantic slave trade, apartheid, colonialism and genocide) and affirm that they must be condemned and their reoccurrence prevented. Some States have taken the initiative to apologize and have paid reparation where appropriate, for grave and massive violations committed.

2 and ensure we learn from this.

There is an increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in parts of the world, and the emergence of racial and violent movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities.

3 So, we must review our education structures

We should redress the marginalisation of Africa's contribution to world history and civilization by implementing a programme of research, education and mass communication to disseminate widely a balanced presentation of Africa's seminal and valuable contribution to humanity.

Also, we should support UNESCO's Slave Route Project and its theme of "Breaking the Silence" by developing texts and testimony.

And reinforce human rights education, to promote an understanding and awareness of the causes, consequences and evils of racism to develop educational materials aimed at combatting those phenomena

And eliminate any elements that might promote racism or reinforce negative stereotypes
And encourage schools to develop educational activities, including extra-curricular ones to raise awareness against racism, and to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)

And, with UNESCO, promote the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World to start in 2002.

4and review current legislation and training programmes

Racism and xenophobia are striving to regain political, moral and even legal recognition including through the platforms of some political parties and organizations and through modern communication technologies.

So, what's needed? A political will to set up legislation, implementation strategies and concrete action.

The government must ensure that the police and immigration authorities treat migrants in a dignified and non-discriminatory manner through organising specialised training courses for administrators, police officers and immigration officials. Also, to design, implement and enforce effective measures to eliminate the phenomenon popularly known as "racial profiling" and comprising the practice of police and other law enforcement officers relying, to any degree, on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin.

And to strengthen the human rights training and awareness-raising activities designed for these groups and the staff of detention centres and prisons, local authorities in charge of enforcing laws, as well as teachers, with particular attention to the human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, in order to prevent acts of racial discrimination and xenophobia.

And, with NGOs, to establish dialogues on the causes and consequences of migration that focus on the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants and on the links between migration and development;

5 And we should show curiosity in the culture of others

Let's push for recognition of the rights to their culture and identity of people of African descent so they may participate more fully in political, social, economic and cultural life; encourage the promotion of their mode of life, culture, traditions and religious expressions; to maintain and use their own languages; to the protection of their traditional knowledge and their cultural and artistic heritage; to the use, enjoyment and conservation of the natural renewable resources of their habitat and to active participation in the design, implementation and development of educational systems and programmes.

So what are the Obligations on the rest of us? These include.....

6 our 'new technology' institutions,

to encourage the business sector, in particular the tourist industry and Internet providers, to develop codes of conduct to prevent trafficking in persons, especially those in prostitution, against gender-based and racial discrimination and promoting their rights, dignity and security;

to encourage ISPs to agree codes of conduct against the dissemination of racist messages.

to use mediating bodies at national and international levels, involving relevant civil society institutions,

to push for legislation to prosecute incitement to racial hatred or violence on new ICT,

to disseminate anti-racist material through the new ICT, including the Internet, by imparting training to law enforcement authorities;

to discourage the transmission of racist and xenophobic messages through all communications media, including ICT;

to respond promptly to the rapidly evolving phenomenon of the dissemination of hate speech and racist material on new ICT;

to encourage access and use by all people of the Internet as an international and equal forum, aware that there are disparities in use of and access to the Internet;

to examine ways in which the positive contribution made by ICT and the Internet can be enhanced through replication of good practices in combatting racism, etc

to encourage the reflection of the diversity of societies among the personnel of media organisations and the new ICT and the Internet, by promoting adequate representation of different segments within societies at all levels of their organisational structure;

7 our media,

We must address the actions of some of the media which, by promoting false images and negative stereotypes of vulnerable groups and individuals, particularly of migrants and refugees, have contributed to the spread of xenophobic and racist sentiments among the public and which have encouraged violence by racist groups.

8 our United Nations,

The Commission on Human Rights should establish a UN working group to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of the African diaspora and make proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against them.

We should press the IMF, World Bank and UN agencies to assign priority and funding to improve the situation of Africans and people of African descent, while devoting special attention to the needs of these populations in developing countries, inter alia through the preparation of specific programmes of action;

UN agencies should carry out special projects, working with Africans and people of African descent, to support their initiatives at the community level and to facilitate the exchange of information between these populations and experts in these areas;

Also, we recommend that the UNDPKO and other UN agencies strengthen their coordination to discern patterns of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law with a view to assessing the risk of further deterioration that could lead to genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

9 our scientists,

They should take measures to prevent genetic research or its applications from being used to promote racism to protect the privacy of personal genetic information and to prevent such information from being used for discriminatory or racist purposes;

10 our parliamentarians,

The Inter-Parliamentary Union should encourage debate in, and action by, Parliaments on various measures including laws and policies to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Also, with schools, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)

11 our religious leaders,

Leaders from religious communities must continue to confront racism through promotion and sponsoring of dialogue and partnerships to bring about reconciliation and healing and harmony within and among societies. The religious community should participate in promoting economic and social revitalization and encourages religious leaders to foster greater cooperation and contact between diverse racial groups.

12and finally, to encourage participation by our youth.

We should encourage the full and active participation of, as well as involve more closely, youth in the elaboration, planning and implementation of activities to fight racism and call upon them, in partnership with NGOs, to facilitate both national and international youth dialogue on racism through the UN World Youth Forum and through the use of new technologies, exchanges and other initiatives.

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