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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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on the Effective Implementation of the
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
Fourth session
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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR

Concept paper: globalization and racism

Introduction

1. The Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG) is one of the three mechanisms established to follow up the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001.
2. Since its first session in 2003, the IGWG has organized its work on a thematic basis by analysing different issues identified in Durban as related to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and has issued recommendations on measures towards the effective implementation of the corresponding provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and analysed the issues of education, poverty, health and the Internet.
3. At its fourth session, the IGWG will devote the first week to a seminar on racism and the Internet and on the need for complementary international standards in combating racism. The second week of the session will begin with a thematic analysis of the issue of globalization and racism.

Background

4. According to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, globalization presents challenges and opportunities with regard to the struggle to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.¹ At the same time, the document recognizes that while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits and costs are unevenly shared and distributed.²

5. At the World Conference, the international community expressed its determination to bring to life the notion of a human family based on equality, dignity and solidarity, and to make the twenty-first century a century of human rights, of the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and of the realization of genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for all individuals and peoples.³

6. Emphasis must be placed on the determination expressed in Durban to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of globalization, which can aggravate poverty, social exclusion, cultural homogenization and economic disparities, which may occur along racial lines.⁴

7. In this regard, the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, based on common values and principles enshrined, inter alia, in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, should be part of our common effort to harness globalization for the benefit, development and prosperity of all countries.

8. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action also articulate the resolve to maximize the benefits of globalization through, inter alia, the strengthening and enhancement of international cooperation to increase equality of opportunities for trade, economic growth and sustainable development, global communications through the use of new technologies and increased intercultural exchange through the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, which can contribute to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.⁵

Suggested topics for discussion

9. Bearing in mind that the mandate of the IGWG is to make recommendations for the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and considering also the discussions held at previous sessions, in particular the debates on poverty during its second session (February 2004), the panellists are invited to address some of the specific challenges mentioned in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action with regard to racism and globalization, inter alia, the need for:

- Identification of those aspects of globalization which may lead to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance⁶ and the means of ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's population, by upholding the principles of human dignity, equality and equity in achieving sustainable development and economic growth and in eradicating poverty, marginalization and deprivation;⁷

- To promote respect for and preserve cultural diversity within and between communities and nations with a view to creating a harmonious multicultural world.⁸ In this regard, consideration should be given to the recently adopted UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;
- To consider long-term approaches to all phases of migration, paying special attention to the root causes of migratory flows such as lack of full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the effects of economic globalization on migration trends;⁹
- To analyse how States and international financial institutions' policies and practices may affect national populations in general and indigenous populations in particular.¹⁰

10. Additionally, panellists may wish to explore how universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights can constitute the basis for the democratic governance of a globalization process that upholds human rights, cultural diversity, equity and non-discrimination, solidarity and sustainability.

11. At the same time, they may also wish to examine ways to further develop dialogues on these issues within the regional and global multilateral systems, taking into account existing international human rights instruments as well as recent developments in this regard, particularly the report of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization (2004).

Participants

12. Participants in the working group are Member States, representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Format of the sessions

13. Panellists will each have the opportunity to make 15-minute presentations, followed by a question-and-answer session, interventions by Member States and a general debate among all the participants. The full involvement and presence of the panellists throughout the panel sessions is crucial.

Documentation

14. Participants will have before them a background paper by OHCHR and papers submitted by the panellists.

15. Member States, representatives of United Nations specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, national institutions and other organizations are also invited to submit contributions, which will be circulated prior to the seminar.

16. Documentation for the panels will also include various reports of seminars and conferences addressing the same themes, as well as the reports of the previous sessions of the IGWG.

17. All relevant documents will be posted on the OHCHR website by 1 January 2006.

Notes

¹ Durban Declaration, preamble, para. 34.

² Ibid., para. 11.

³ Ibid., preamble, para. 35.

⁴ Ibid., para. 11.

⁵ Durban Programme of Action, para. 11.

⁶ Ibid., para. 152.

⁷ Ibid., para. 105.

⁸ Ibid., para. 179.

⁹ Ibid., para. 96.

¹⁰ Ibid., para. 208.
