

Check against delivery

**Tenth session of the Intergovernmental Working Group
on the Effective Implementation of the
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG)**



**UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER**

**Opening Statement by
Ms. Navi Pillay
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Geneva, 8 October 2012

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the tenth session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (IGWG).

This is the first meeting of the IGWG during the second decade of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. In the preceding decade, the DDPA provided both a framework for action and rallying platform for mobilization against the scourge of racism. Just last year in September, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the DDPA, a sort of stocktaking event that witnessed a high-level meeting of the General Assembly and adoption of a political declaration in which Member States restated their commitment to the DDPA as providing a framework for global action and advocacy against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. During the same year we also commemorated the first International Year for People of African Descent. As an outcome of that commemoration we are at the cusp of the General Assembly proclaiming an international decade for people of African descent.

All these achievements were possible, thanks to a large extent to the leadership provided by the IGWG in collaboration with other mechanisms established under the DDPA and by international human rights treaties.

As you start this new phase of eliminating this old scourge called racism, which keeps reinventing itself in new forms, you need to redouble your efforts and examine effective ways to uproot this heinous phenomenon. No nation can do this alone. Building understanding and forging partnerships are essential. The topics you have selected for this session leaves no one in doubt that this is precisely your objective: how to work together at the national, regional and international level to combat racial discrimination and xenophobia.

In various parts of the globe we have noticed the deleterious consequences on inter-ethnic relations and harmony, of unscrupulous pursuit of power by political parties and politicians that preach division and difference rather than unity. I am pleased that you have chosen to devote time to this topical subject.

Equally important is addressing the challenges faced in generating consensus in international and regional cooperation with regard to the implementation of the DDPA. This inclusion in your agenda demonstrates a very positive commitment to working together to enhance synergies and complementarities. In this respect, I would like to particularly commend the joint initiative of the African Union and the European Union in organizing a workshop on 5 June 2012 here in Geneva for their respective Member States with a view to exchanging information on best practices in combatting racial discrimination at all levels and addressing incitement to racial hatred.

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our work and collective efforts in this multilateral forum will succeed or fail depending on the extent to which it makes a real difference in the lives of victims. It is my hope that your efforts in considering the topical issues on your agenda for this session will result in practical recommendations which will contribute to improving in concrete ways the lives of the victims of

racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We should use the precious resources we have to advance our work in a positive and constructive manner.

So far, the IGWG has adopted several recommendations covering education, sports, migration, protection of children and employment. These recommendations should form the basis of national action plans to combat racism. My Office relies on these recommendations in its dialogue with States and in its development of a tool that will provide a schematic platform for generating information from Member States and relevant stakeholders on their implementation. Once finalised, this tool will provide updated information on the state of play with respect to the implementation of the IGWG recommendations and help to demonstrate the impact that your work has had on the ground. It will also help to identify opportunities for future collaboration in implementing IGWG recommendations.

We have also strengthened UN inter-agency collaboration in mainstreaming anti-discrimination through the establishment earlier in 2012 of the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The network which is coordinated by OHCHR aims to enhance dialogue and cooperation between relevant UN departments, Agencies, Programmes and Funds. It is envisaged that the network will contribute to building coherent and contextualised UN action and messages on racial discrimination and minority issues, both globally and in specific regions, and provide support for strong engagement by the Secretary-General on these issues.

But as we are strengthening our substantive work to address racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, I should state that my Office including the Anti-Discrimination Section which supports your work has had to deal with the consequences of dwindling resources linked to the poor global economic climate. We have taken several measures to rationalize our resources, including sometimes painful cost-cutting measures. You would be helping us a great deal should you bear this in your deliberations and consider the financial implications of your recommendations.

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I already stated at the outset, you have chosen two topical issues for your 10th session, the role of politicians and political parties in combating racism as well the enhancement of international and regional co-operation in the implementation of the DDPA. I look forward to receiving your recommendations on both subjects in the hope that your deliberations will produce practical and concrete proposals on the positive role politicians and political parties can play in combating racism as well as the specific roles of regional and international cooperation and specific strategies for maximising collaboration.

Thank you and good luck in your deliberations.

