

Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent
Eighth Session Geneva, 12-16 January 2009

Statement about the Durban Review
and People of African Descent
Presented during the Session, January 15, 2009.

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As representatives of NGOs committed to the well-being of African Descendants, we are deeply disturbed by the direction of the Durban Review and without significant change it will failed to provide the mechanism of accountability needed to assure effective progress on the elimination of racism and racial discrimination.

The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa offered a unique opportunity to address an issue that has been plaguing us and our children: anti-Black racism. The governments met the challenge and produced a Declaration and a Programme of Action that could lead the world to real change.

For African Descendants, the Durban Declaration and Progamme of Action are historic. It acknowledge[d] that . . . the transatlantic slave trade. . . [is] among the major source and manifestations of racism” and that . . . Africans and People of African Descent. . . continue to be victims of [its] consequences. ¹ The Declaration goes on to recognize colonialism has led to racial discrimination against Africans and People of African Descent, the consequences of which must be prevented. ² The Declaration expressed a commitment to Africans and People of African Descent, including the eradification of all forms of racism, racial intolerance, xenophobia and other intolerance faced by African and People of African Descent ³

The Declaration is accompanied by a very specific Programme of Action, of which Item 4 through Item 14 were specifically directed at Africans and People of African Descent. These items among other things called for states to take affirmative and positive initiatives in communities of primarily African Descendant, to ensure access to education and the inclusion of the history of African Descendant, to take steps to remove obstacles that prevent the full participation of People of African Descent, to ensure full and effective access to the justice system. ⁴ The Programme of Action also called for the United Nations and other international institutions to, among other things develop capacity building programs in communities of Africans and People of African Descent.

The Question, after eight years, is what progress has the states, the United Nations and other institutions made toward the elimination racism, particularly anti-Black racism. The Durban Review is designed to assess that progress. Like any Programme of Action, accountability is essential to assure effective and appropriate progress.

It is our view that the Durban Review is being hijacked by governments and members of civil society who do not have as their highest priority the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, especially for African and People of African Descent. This is evidenced by the lack of participation of both governments and civil society in this process particularly the withdrawal of several key governments such as Canada and Israel by the inadequate funding for the Durban Review, by the inadequate funding

and support of the participation of the civil society and the seeming lack of item by item critical analysis of progress governments have made towards the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action as it relates to African and People of African Descent.

There is time to correct the course.

We call for:

- Full participation of governments around the world but particularly, the European Union, Canada, the United States, Brazil and other countries with high portion of People of African Descent;
- Funding of the Durban Review be sufficient to undertake a critical analysis of Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;
- Adequate funding and resources be provided to allow for full participation of the civil society, particularly allow full participation of Africans and People of African Descent from middle-income and low income societies;
- A critical analysis be undertaken to assess government effectiveness in implementing the item 4 through item 14 of the Programme of Action which is directed at Africans and People of African Descent;
- A critical analysis be undertaken to assess the states effectiveness in the progress on "remedies, reparations" for the modern day effect of the transatlantic slave trade and racial injuries;
- An International summit on all aspects of the transatlantic slave trade including assessment of the modern day effect and racial injuries, organized under the auspices of the Working Group of Experts on Africans and People of African Descent;
- The Working Group of Experts adopt the resolutions on Africans and People of African Descent presented to the 40th Forum in Banjul in 2006, 41st Forum in Accra in 2007, the 43rd Forum in Abuja in 2008 and the Brazil Forum in 2008, and the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, East Africa, Durban + 5 Roundtable Report April 18-20-2007.

1. Item 13, Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, p. 16 (2001).

2. Item 14, Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, p. 16 (2001).

3. Item 32 to Item 35, Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, p. 21-22 (2001).

4. Item 32 to Item 35, Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, p. 21-22 (2001).