



#FightRacism

#AllIn4MinorityRights

#StandUp4HumanRights

## 21 March 2022 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Annually Commemorating the [1960 Sharpeville Massacre](#) in Apartheid South Africa

### Message from the [UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities](#)

This year, as we celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [UN 1992 Minorities Declaration](#), the theme of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is **Voices for Action against Racism**.

Systemic racism experienced by people around the world impedes the realization of *all* their human rights. Laws, policies and practices continue to lead, directly or indirectly, to extreme poverty and marginalization, discrimination, violence, persecution, denial and deprivation of nationality, and forced displacement, as well as to other violations of equal treatment and dignity. Individuals and communities most affected by racial discrimination face increasing challenges. Their vulnerability has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why the UN Secretary-General has called in his recent [Our Common Agenda Report](#) for “new approaches to proactively support the participation in public affairs of those who have traditionally been marginalized, including minority and indigenous groups”.

The 2021 [Agenda towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality](#) puts forward far-reaching commitments to end systemic racism against people of African descent, under four pillars related to reversing cultures of denial, dismantling systemic racism and accelerating the pace of action; enduring impunity for human rights violations by law enforcement officials and closing trust deficits; ensuring that the voices of people of African descent and those who stand up against racism are heard and their concerns acted upon; and confronting legacies, including through accountability and redress. As 2022 begins, we welcome the establishment of a new [Permanent Forum on People of African Descent](#). We also welcome the establishment of the new International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the Context of Law Enforcement. We further welcome the launch of the [International Decade of Indigenous Languages](#) (2022-2032).



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### **Whose voices should we amplify?**

We must amplify the voices of those who have not been heard for too long, due to racism and related forms of intolerance. We must amplify the voices of those who face harassment, surveillance, intimidation and sometimes violence animated by racism, racial discrimination or related intolerance. We must amplify the voice of those who have fled their homes because of racism and who have often faced stigma on the road to safety and in their countries of asylum. We must amplify the voices of those who stand up against racism and related intolerance, xenophobia, inequality, oppression and marginalization, often at the risk of their own lives and wellbeing and those of their families and communities. We must amplify the voices of women, girls, LGBTIQ+ people, persons with disabilities and others from minority, people of African descent, indigenous, descent-based or other stigmatized communities silenced as a result of intersectional inequalities.

### **What can the UN and its partners do more and better?**

We need to ensure that all those who raise their voices to stand up for their rights and for the rights of others are protected, heard, and that their concerns are acted upon.

- We must place the people who are confronted with racism and other forms of discrimination at the center of all of the UN's work, and ensure their effective participation in policy and other appropriate fora. We must recognize the central role of people and communities in standing up against racism, racial discrimination and related forms of intolerance, and ensure that these voices are protected, heard, and that their concerns are acted upon. This includes taking prompt action to address the grievances that lead to individuals and communities taking a stand against racism. We stand ready to encourage and support these voices, calling for continued funding for movements and organizations, as well as public recognition.
- We commit to act on the call of the Secretary General to "increase UN support at field level for the promotion of laws and policies that protect the right to equal participation and civic space".<sup>1</sup> We will continue to provide guidance to States and others in creating an enabling environment and prioritizing spaces for voices to be heard freely and safely –

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/content/action-for-human-rights/index.shtml>



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through support for rights of freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association, as well as participation, without any form of discrimination.

- We must call out -- through our programmes, operations, policies, advocacy, work with our counterparts and communications -- racism and related forms of intolerance; and expose and help address its manifestations, including new and emerging challenges such as those relating to artificial intelligence and new technologies, as well as its root causes, be it in legislation; in economic and political systems; in justice and law enforcement; in health or education; in societal and social norms in cultural norms and practices; and in our own internal policies and practices. We commit to proactive efforts to combat hate speech and incitement to violence, hatred and hostility.
- We must recognize that other grounds of discrimination often compound racial discrimination or lead to particular and extreme forms of exclusion. These grounds may include sex, gender identity or expression, age, disability, sexual orientation, and/or refugee, migration and other status, a non-exhaustive list. We must deliberately tackle intersectional discrimination in our work. We stand ready to provide legal and policy support to those actors, entities, governments and law- and policy makers responding to the call of the Secretary General for the “long overdue ... adoption of comprehensive laws against discrimination”.<sup>2</sup>
- We must ensure that children and adults are able to learn and know about their rights, are equipped to tackle all forms of discrimination, including by using innovative means such as the arts and sports, and engage them as partners, providing opportunities for them to lead the way and become a Voice of Action against racism. We must also act to protect minority human rights defenders speaking out to stand up for their rights, and those of others.
- We must ensure that our organizations reflect fully the diversity of those people and communities we serve. We further need to challenge all forms of conscious and unconscious bias in our work to ensure inclusive environments in which people feel comfortable to raise their voices and express their views. We must ensure that all UN employees, irrespective of their background, circumstances or status have equal chances to join and thrive within the organization. We believe that achieving genuine diversity at all levels will strengthen the efficacy of our actions on all aspects of the United Nations mandate. We also believe these are matters of basic justice for the people we serve. We must embody and be the change we seek.

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<sup>2</sup> Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary General, 2021: <https://www.un.org/en/un75/common-agenda>



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Ultimately, and collectively, we must set the example and champion the fight against racial discrimination everywhere.

### **Learn about our efforts**

The [United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities](#) provides a platform to address through awareness raising, advocacy and capacity building, issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including issues of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The Network brings together more than 20 UN Departments, Agencies, Programmes and Funds.

### **Share our resources**

- [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(ICERD\)](#)
- [Durban Declaration and Program of Action \(2001 World Conference Against Racism\)](#)
- [1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities](#)
- [Implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 43/1: Agenda towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality](#)
- [Secretary General Guidance Note on Racial Discrimination and Minorities](#)
- [Checklist to strengthen UN work at country level to combat racial discrimination and advance minority rights](#)
- [Racism](#)
- [Talking to your kids about racism](#)
- [Updates on UNICEF's work towards addressing anti-racism and discrimination \(As 2021\)](#)
- [A diverse and inclusive workforce is part of UNICEF's DNA](#)
- [UNHCR Guidance on racism and xenophobia](#)
- [Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Addressing Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Humanitarian Sector, 2020](#)
- [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Action Plan, June 2021](#)
- [Marginalized Minorities in Development Programming](#)
- [Minorities, Discrimination and Statelessness](#)
- [Minority Rights, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Law](#)
- [UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#)
- [Combatting Intolerance against Persons based on Religion or Belief](#)
- [Roma Inclusion](#)
- [COVID 19 and Minority Rights](#)
- [Minority Artists, Voice and Dissidence](#)
- [International Decade of Indigenous Languages \(2022-2032\)](#)
- [Protecting Civic Space](#)