

Commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)

UN Calls to 'Stem the Tide' of Racism and Intolerance

Ten years after the global conference in Durban, South Africa, sought to uproot all forms of racism, much progress has been made, yet intolerance has actually increased in many parts of the world, top UN officials warned. "The resurgence and persistence of such inhumane attitudes and detrimental practices indicate that we have not done enough to stem the tide," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the high-level General Assembly meeting held to mark the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration, the outcome document of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

"Let us defend the rights of all, without distinction of any kind, as the Universal Declaration proclaims. Neither race, color or language...not political or other opinion...not property, birth or other status...none of these things should be a barrier to the enjoyment of rights and freedoms" said UN Secretary-General on 22 September 2011, at the one day high-level meeting in New York to commemorate the adoption of the DDPA. This document, which was adopted by consensus at the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, is recognized by the international community as the most comprehensive framework for fighting racism and related forms of intolerance and discrimination. It represents a firm commitment from the international community to tackle these issues, and serves as a basis for advocacy efforts worldwide.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action highlights issues faced by victims of racial discrimination, including people of African and Asian descent, migrants, refugees, and specific vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, the Roma and other minorities. The Declaration contains specific measures to combat racism in all of its manifestations, through many different approaches including education, strengthening of the rule of law, as well as providing services and resources for victims of racial discrimination. The Declaration also underscores the need to respect the human rights of all groups subjected to racial discrimination, and emphasizes their right to participate freely and equally in political, social, economic and cultural life of the societies in which they live.

A decade after the original conference, racism and related acts of intolerance still occur on a daily basis all around the world. Although the international community has made advances toward racial equality, rising bigotry and prejudice continue to be challenges for all countries. The Durban follow-up represents a renewed commitment from the international community to tackle these issues by providing a basis for action and advocacy worldwide.

During the recent meeting of the General Assembly, world leaders with new resolve committed to a "strong determination to make the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the protection of the victims thereof, a high priority for [their] countries." A political declaration was adopted by consensus, welcoming the progress made in many parts of the world since 2001, though acknowledging that for the victims of racism there is still a long way to go.