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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by African Green Foundation International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Sri Lanka: Race & Racial Prejudice

The subject of race & racial prejudice in Sri Lanka will not be understood unless we have a clear idea of how race & racial prejudiced travelled through history & time to be embedded into society & the psyche of people. We continue to return to colonial rule where every ill the world suffers today – from ethnic tensions, artificial borders & boundaries, plunder of resources, racial prejudices etc. were all part of the divide & rule strategies that have traversed time through the colonial administrative & educational & religious ideological systems that were rolled out in every country except for the 11 nations that were never colonized.

UNESCO Declaration on Race & Racial Prejudice in 1978 claims its objective of promoting collaboration among nations through education, science & culture for the rule of law & human rights & fundamental freedoms without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.

Before the age of discovery & before Western European explorers advocated the ‘doctrine of discovery’ of lands that were already inhabited going so far as to declare it their right to convert natives or murder those that refused to be converted or kills – people lived without any of the nomenclatures now in vogue in the halls of the UN & international systems all of which were created by the ‘victors’ of world wars completely ignoring the native & indigenous laws, customs, systems that were followed by them and were successful to such extents that they had no prisons, they required no lawyers, they had no police, surveillance, cameras etc.

Exactly when did racism and the use of racism originate? So far as records reveal the use of the term racism began when colonials who were illegally occupying territories & nations went so far as to even commence census with race & caste being demarcated. Though caste existed in ancient times it was only used to identify people & not project a notion of superior/inferiority as happened during colonial rule & this set the foundation for the mentality to think racially, to think of people as being inferior or superior & subject them to a new class of haves – have nots – rich-poor-middle class. All these terms were coined by Western European rulers and used as part of their divide & rule strategy. However, so long as the originators of these terms do not accept their accountability in dividing the world, societies, people etc we will never find a solution to the problem. More importantly, the problem creators have no moral right in championing any solution knowing they are the cause of the problem (s)

Let us not forget who started institutionalized racism started by the West - apartheid, racial segregation in the United States of America, humans (blacks/slaves) put into zoos & charged fees for white audiences to gloat over, slave trade – all of these were embedded into society by the white colonial rulers & the systems they created.

Let us also not forget that man evolved in Africa – therefore, Africans spread to all corners of the world some 48,000 years ago to start different civilizations. 100% white skinned people emerged only some 3000 years ago. Europe was occupied by black-skinned people for some 48,000 years

Let us not forget the many tribes & races that the Western European explorers made extinct in South Americas, Australia/New Zealand & even Africa & parts of Asia. What happened to the ancient civilizations of Incas, Aztecs etc. after Europeans landed on their original habitats?

Let us not forget that any convention cannot omit to hold to account all nations that committed genocide as a policy. What we see today happening is media hype about ‘genocide’ with no proper evidence as seen in the lies flagged about Srebrenica genocide or the 40,000 ‘genocide’ in Sri Lanka.

Let us not forget more Germans died after the World War ended than during the war – more than 2m German women were said to have been raped. What was done as accountability for these crimes?

Let us also not forget that part of the divide & rule policy of the Western explorers was to remove the heritage culture, traditions & denationalize the natives. Therefore, how can the UN claim to protect cultures & seek international cultural cooperation while ignoring these ground realities? No culture can be brought to one platform and made equal to another. Every culture is unique & the need is to ensure everyone learns to respect other cultures without trying to destroy, remove, dilute or transfer another culture to replace it. Forced assimilation is what happened to natives forced to accept & embrace Western cultures that were foreign to them.

How racially tolerant is the first world West that keeps pointing fingers at non-Western developing world nations? Of the 2.2m prison population in US close to 30% are blacks. Statistics reveal disproportionate arrests of non-whites, attacks on non-whites, employment discriminations at every level, difference in salaries to non-whites as well as lower wages for females doing same job as males. Statistics in EU & the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland also reveal similar racial discrimination – racial gestures, comments, threats, unable to rent homes because of their skin colour etc.

There are embedded into media/communications & educational systems as well – everything good is projected as white – everything bad is projected as black so psychologically from child onwards the presumption is that whites are the preferred people. The same media tends to always scoff at the traditions & cultures of developing world to the level that they are primitive – this is carried forward from the ‘white man’s burden’ notion of ‘civilizing’ non-whites that was prevalent in colonial rule.

No universal declaration using fancy terms & slogans can erase the fact that countries of the West are continuing colonial endeavours through neo-colonial imperialism where with the power of institutional financial bodies developing world are kept in debt repaying interests on the loans taken while the loan which is created money ends up subjecting countries to various structural adjustments that reduce the quality of life to their citizens – removal of national welfare schemes, free health, free education, various handouts by the government to the poor & impoverished are always insisted to be cut by these international institutions. Why? Isn’t the outcome creating a bigger bridge & inequality with rich getting richer & poor getting poorer. Where has the world actually progressed when OXFAM says 1% own the accumulated wealth of the 99% in the world – 8 men own wealth of accumulated wealth of world’s 3.5billion people. How unequal is the world in spite of all the equality slogans?

With these ground realities we look at Sri Lanka’s case of racism & racial discrimination.

There are 3 main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka of which the majority is Sinhalese & the minority ethnic groups are Tamil & Muslims while in terms of religion Buddhists are the majority & Hindus, Islam & Christianity/Catholicism are the minorities.

Anyone who advocates notion of Sri Lanka having racial or religious discrimination has to first answer these questions

- What is it that the minorities exclusively suffer because they are a minority that the majority does not suffer because they are the majority?
- What are grievances exclusive to the minorities only
- What are the special privileges accrued to the majority that which is denied to the minorities?
- The constitution of Sri Lanka gives right of freedom to all citizens to live where they like – can Sinhalese live & own land in the North & parts of East without having to face protests, demonstrations & abuse by minorities?
- All those who promote notion of discrimination must first explain the number of minorities holding positions in Govt, public sector, private sector from junior to senior positions.
- Every allegation that has been presented & promoted over the years can be easily negated by evidence based examples & if international agencies & UN shed their bias and stuck to collecting data & evidence instead of promoting slogans.

Race & racial prejudices cannot be taken out of context & without exploring the roots to how prejudices started & by whom & how far these entities have institutionalised these biases into systems.

Sri Lanka is a classic example of prejudices planted by colonial rulers as part of their divide & rule policies. However, no post-independent government has adopted any race or racial discrimination as a state policy.
