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WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,  
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA  
AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

Preparatory Committee

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REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION FOR THE  
PREPARATORY COMMITTEE AND THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Ways of improving coordination between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and all specialized agencies and international, regional and subregional organizations in the field of action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Note by the secretariat

### Introduction

1. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1999/78 (para. 63 (a)), requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake a study to be submitted to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance on ways of improving coordination between her Office and all specialized agencies and international, regional and subregional organizations in the field of action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Pursuant to this resolution, the High Commissioner sent letters to the heads of relevant organizations in October 1999. As of 25 January 2000, replies had been received from the International Labour Office (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe. It was not considered feasible to undertake a study at this time given the small number of replies received. The information contained in the present note is therefore based primarily on the replies received and on the memoranda of understanding (MOU) signed between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other agencies which define bilateral action to be taken to combat racism.
2. The MOU between OHCHR and UNESCO and between OHCHR and UNDP spell out modalities of cooperation and joint activities to combat racism. The former states that both parties agree to cooperate in the planning and implementation of the convening of the World Conference, and the latter that the two organizations would cooperate in the country projects, carried out jointly or individually, to promote the objectives of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and implement their respective plans of action. The MOU between UNDP and OHCHR is closely monitored and implemented alongside UNDP's policy on "Integrating human rights with sustainable human development".
3. The elimination of racial discrimination has been a core human rights mandate since the establishment of the United Nations. The United Nations has pursued the elimination of racial discrimination through a variety of programmes, activities, conferences and legal instruments. However, strategies to combat racism and racial discrimination offer a complex picture and present an overall problem of coordination. Significant measures are still needed to develop and strengthen the mechanisms already in place.
4. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in Part II A, paragraph 1, states: "The World Conference on Human Rights recommends increased coordination in support of human rights and fundamental freedoms within the United Nations system. To this end, the World Conference on Human Rights urges all United Nations organs, bodies and the specialized agencies whose activities deal with human rights to cooperate in order to strengthen, rationalize and streamline their activities, taking into account the need to avoid unnecessary duplication."

## I. POSSIBLE AREAS OF COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

### A. At the international level

#### 1. Information exchange

5. The information possessed by various organizations on specific situations or cases, or on actions taken, could be shared more effectively between them. This is crucial in analysing situations of racial discrimination in specific countries. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which has been ratified by some 155 States. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and ILO are the only bodies normally represented at the Committee's sessions. For its consideration of States parties reports, CERD generally receives information from UNHCR, ILO and a few other organizations such as UNDP and ECRI. In particular, ILO provides CERD at each of its sessions with information on how related ILO Conventions are applied in the countries under examination by CERD. In order to examine the situation of a country as thoroughly, accurately and comprehensively as possible, it is vital that the Committee be provided with relevant and quality information. It is equally important that the work of the Committee is known to those specialized agencies or organizations which undertake relevant activities in the countries being examined by CERD, so that they can take into account the Committee's recommendations in their work.

6. IOM recommended that agencies should be encouraged to provide information to the various bodies and entities within the United Nations system charged with combating racial discrimination. CERD's review of States parties' implementation of the Convention as well as the relevant activities of the Special Rapporteur on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants would greatly benefit from information from a greater number of agencies.

7. ILO reported that the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations takes account of CERD documents and conclusions in its examination of the application of ILO Conventions by member States. ILO highlighted the need to explore how the United Nations could provide it on a regular basis with information which could have an impact on the application of ILO Conventions, in particular the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

8. In relation to the forthcoming World Conference, ILO considered that it would be useful to examine at a very early stage how to ensure that the work undertaken by the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and by other bodies, including United Nations programmes, is fully taken into account in the deliberations of the World Conference and in its preparation.

## 2. Monitoring action to combat racism

9. The creation of an effective mechanism to follow up, monitor and evaluate programmes to combat racism is recognized as important in order to improve international coordination and effective use of resources. In its Programme of Action, the second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination held in 1983 recommended the creation of a regular system of review and appraisal to enable Member States, as well as all organizations of the United Nations system - including relevant regional bodies and non-governmental organizations - to assess the measures taken towards achieving the aims and objectives of the Second Decade.

10. The creation of a follow-up mechanism would also enable a systematic exchange of information on related reports and studies or technical cooperation projects undertaken by United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, and international, regional and subregional organizations. IOM was of the view that OHCHR could coordinate systematic input provided by agencies. With such a system in place, CERD or any other United Nations human rights mechanism could obtain information as required.

## 3. Consultations

11. In preparation for the World Conference, ILO suggested that consultations be held between the specialized agencies and other concerned United Nations bodies. ECRI added that one possibility for improving coordination at the European level could be to provide for regular consultations between ECRI, on the one hand, and CERD and the Special Rapporteur on the other. UNESCO considered it important that OHCHR participates in meetings sponsored by UNESCO, such as the Meeting of Directors of Human Rights Institutes, which could mobilize various partners in the struggle against discrimination and intolerance.

## 4. Promoting universal ratification of the Convention

12. Some replies expressed the view that OHCHR and other agencies and organizations should cooperate closely in order to promote universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

13. Within the framework of the MOU between UNDP and OHCHR, UNDP has been making a substantive contribution to the work of the treaty bodies, including the promotion of the ratification of the Convention. UNDP's approach of working through its country offices to respond to Governments seeking assistance or advice on the ratification of human rights instruments or on reporting obligations has been positive in this regard.

## 5. Information and education

14. In its resolution 1999/78 the Commission on Human Rights requested the High Commissioner to draw up a programme of human rights education and to create a Web site which could be used to share human rights experiences in the struggle against racism. It also urged all United Nations bodies and international, regional and subregional governmental

organizations to support the High Commissioner and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat through a public information strategy centred around the objectives of the World Conference.

15. OHCHR created a section for the World Conference on its Web site, where information about the World Conference and related documents is available. The Web site could also include information on the activities of the specialized agencies, United Nations bodies and international and regional organizations in the struggle against racism and documents dealing with the issue.

16. In its reply, UNESCO mentioned the possibility of joint action with OHCHR, such as a publication dedicated to the struggle against discrimination and intolerance that would include two prefaces signed respectively by the Director-General of UNESCO and by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

#### 6. Advisory services, technical cooperation and other support

17. IOM recommended that United Nations staff members at Headquarters and in the field receive training in combating racism that would enable them to deal with violations of the Convention and to incorporate an “anti-racism” approach into their work.

18. The MOU between UNDP and OHCHR has created a framework for closer and substantive cooperation on training. It states that UNDP and OHCHR shall cooperate in providing training programmes in human rights and development for international civil servants, especially those working in the areas of development, human rights, democracy and peace-building. Furthermore, the MOU stipulates that OHCHR shall organize briefings on current aspects of the promotion and protection of human rights for UNDP senior managers and shall contribute to other staff training, as required. In consultation with OHCHR, UNDP shall include a human rights component in its staff training programme and OHCHR shall make its human rights expertise and training materials available for that purpose.

19. UNDP mentioned that there are ongoing projects, including four joint UNDP-OHCHR regional training workshops, for UNDP Resident Representatives/United Nations Resident Coordinators aimed at increasing their knowledge of human rights. The workshops cover the key principles of human rights, including the principle of non-discrimination and an introduction to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In addition, a training module on human rights for UNDP staff is being developed containing elements on the elimination of racial discrimination. Further training is envisaged in cooperation with OHCHR and the United Nations Staff College.

#### B. At the national level

20. It is recognized that the most effective way to combat racism is at the country level. While there has been much progress in cooperation at the international level, there is an urgent need for more systematic cooperation at the country level.

21. Under the MOU, UNDP and OHCHR can undertake the following actions at the national level:

- The implementation of CERD recommendations at the country level; UNDP can incorporate racial tolerance and understanding into its country programmes;
- Upon receipt of relevant material from OHCHR, UNDP can assist in the dissemination of information on the reporting process under CERD, including the possible contributions by civil society;
- Upon being provided background information, UNDP can make available to all interested persons and organizations information concerning the status of States parties' reports submitted to CERD, the reports themselves, and the concluding observations or comments adopted by the Committee;
- Upon request, UNDP can provide information on the available communications procedures and channel to OHCHR communications from individuals and groups alleging that their rights under the Convention have been violated. In the framework of the MOU a brochure on human rights complaints has been published for Resident Coordinators and Resident Representatives. Additionally, a "Human rights guideline for Resident Coordinators" has been developed in the framework of the United Nations Development Group, which includes guidance on the formalities of channelling human rights complaints to the appropriate international mechanisms;
- The provision of logistical support for fact-finding missions. This assistance may include participation in planning, supporting, and ensuring follow-up of missions;
- OHCHR can ensure that UNDP Country Offices are provided with updated information on CERD, in particular concerning the reports scheduled to be examined, the concluding observations thereon, as well as on final decisions adopted under the individual communications procedure.

22. UNESCO stated that it intended to mobilize its network of Chairs (44 in 35 countries) to participate actively in the activities linked with the International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. UNESCO plans to convene a meeting of its representatives in order to further increase their contribution to the organization's activities, in particular those related to the International Year.

## II. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

23. The World Conference represents both a challenge and an opportunity for coordinating efforts throughout the United Nations system. By striving for effective and efficient action through enhanced coordination, the United Nations system will be better able to offer assistance to Governments and civil society in their efforts to combat racism.

24. A systematic flow of information should be ensured between OHCHR and United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other international, regional and subregional organizations on the situation of racism and racial discrimination.
25. United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and international, regional and subregional organizations are encouraged to:
- (a) Transmit reports and information material dealing with the elimination of racial discrimination to the various bodies within the United Nations system charged with combating racism;
  - (b) Cooperate closely with a view to promoting universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
  - (c) Include, within the context of their respective public relations and information activities, information about the World Conference and the preparatory process so that the widest possible dissemination of information about these events can be achieved;
  - (d) Provide relevant information to be included on the Web site.
26. A permanent follow-up mechanism could be established in order to monitor and evaluate programmes to combat racism and to coordinate the exchange of information. This mechanism could be responsible for gathering information among United Nations bodies and specialized agencies about the preparatory process for the World Conference and for ensuring the implementation of the final outcome of the World Conference. Such a mechanism could be incorporated within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
27. Consultations between all concerned organizations on issues relating directly or indirectly to the elimination of racial discrimination should be held on a regular basis. The consultations would aim at identifying specific issues to be addressed, the steps that need to be taken and the form such action should take (i.e. whether at the international, regional or national level). Within the preparatory process for the World Conference an inter-agency consultation mechanism should be established.
28. Staff of United Nations bodies and organizations, at their headquarters and at their duty stations, should receive training enabling them to deal with violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to incorporate an “anti-racism” approach into their work. Special attention should be placed on integrating action to eliminate racism and racial discrimination in the activities of the United Nations at the country level.

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