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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 International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

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

[03 June 2019]

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



Recognizing and combating Afrophobia

The International Decade for People of African Descent which has been declared by the UN General Assembly for the period 2015-2024 represent a important achievement in the process of implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Particularly the adoption by consensus by the General Assembly of the Programme of Activities for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent is of great significance. The International Decade must be used effectively to combat racism against people of African Descent in every respect in the spirit of “Recognition, Justice, Development”. At every stage of implementing the Programme of Activities of the Decade it must be stressed that the full and effective implementation of the DDPA is an indispensable and integral part of the realization of the Decade. All attempts to erase the full and effective implementation of the DDPA from programmes to implement the Decade should be strongly rejected.

It should be noted that the Programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade adopted by consensus in its second paragraph stress that “the implementation of the programme of activities for the International Decade is an integral part of the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and in compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination as the principal international instruments for the elimination of racism.”

Furthermore the Programme of Activities in its first paragraph states that: “The International Decade for People of African Descent, to be observed from 2015 to 2024, constitutes an auspicious period of history when the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors will join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development”

We welcome the active use of the term “Afrophobia” by the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the first time in his address to the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on April 1, 2015 and on successive occasions.

The International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN) together with the World Against Racism Network (WARN) has spearheaded the promotion of the Afrophobia term in the UN Human Rights mechanisms and consider the growing acceptance of this term in the UN Human Rights system as a highly significant development in implementing UN programmes against racism.

In its resolution 21/33 adopted on 28 September 2012 the Human Rights Council deplored “ the special form of discrimination faced by people of African descent known as ‘Afrophobia’”.

It can also be noted that the Afrophobia term has been included latest in a resolution adopted by the General Assembly in December 2018 (73/157).

The affirmation by the Human Rights Council of the term Afrophobia was in response to the recommendations of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent at its tenth and eleventh sessions as proposed to the Working Group by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations with the support of the World Against Racism Network. In the report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent from its twelfth session adopted on 26 April 2013 the Working Group stated that “The recognition by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 21/33 of the term “Afrophobia”, as had been recommended by the Working Group, requires an active and systematic follow-up in order to assure the full implementation of this important assertion of the special and unique form of discrimination faced by people of African descent and assuring its equal use with analogous terms that are used to address the stigmatization and prejudice against ethnic, religious and other vulnerable groups.”

We welcome that the group of countries, the European Union, which has previously objected to the introduction of the term “Afrophobia” both in negotiations on resolutions

and in statements at the Council has now been able to reconsider its objections. We recall the previous statement at the Human Rights Council on 27 September 2011 where the EU stated that “establishing a hierarchy of those affected by racial discrimination is not acceptable. Therefore the EU rejects the introduction of potentially harmful terminology as *afrophobia*”. We hope that this positive development will help to further affirm the validity of the *Afrophobia* term within the United Nations.

In the context of the above it should be noted that the “*Afrophobia*” term has gained an increased use in European countries and at the international level and also been included in government ordinances relating to work against discrimination in at least one EU country, Sweden, without “harmful” consequences. The term is for example actively used by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and the Swedish Minister for Integration of the previous government commissioned the Multicultural Centre to conduct a systematic review of the current situation on *afrophobia* experienced by Swedes of African descent and which report was presented on February 3, 2014. The report indicated that *Afrophobia*, discrimination against persons of African descent, is widespread and a problem in Sweden and that the use of the *Afrophobia* term will hopefully help the government to better address the situation. When the newly elected Swedish Prime Minister presented his inaugural address to the parliament on October 3 2014 he included the fight against *Afrophobia* in his government programme. This demonstrates the importance of this form of recognition of discrimination against people of African descent. It can furthermore be noted that the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) composed of Members of Parliament from different parties has formed a special Working Group on *Afrophobia* chaired by one of its Co-Presidents. On 5 December, 2017, the High Level Group for Racism, Xenophobia and other forms of Intolerance of the European Union held its first official discussion on *Afrophobia* which should be an important breakthrough for the recognition of the *Afrophobia* term in the EU. In that context the Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra Jourová, stated that: “This time, the EU High Level Group is focusing on antigypsyism and *afrophobia*. These are two worrying trends which are still raising very serious concerns, so it’s important to discuss ways to combat them.” Furthermore the Coordinator of Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI), Alfiaz Vaiya, pointed out that: “For the first time, the European Commission held a specific session on *Afrophobia* during the fourth High Level Group on Racism, Xenophobia and other forms of Intolerance on December 5th which brought relevant actors and experts who have a direct role in dealing with legislation and policies related to its work. The High Level group is important given the rise of racism, xenophobia and intolerance across the EU and Commissioner Jourova and colleagues from DG JUST should be commended for initiating it as well as for their excellent work and commitment in this field. The focus on *Afrophobia* is especially welcomed given the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights comment piece on *Afrophobia* and presentation of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) EU MIDIS results.” We welcome the publication by the policy paper on “*Afrophobia: Acknowledging and Understanding the Challenges to Ensure Effective Responses*” published by the EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in November 2018. In this regard we welcome and appreciate the reference to these developments and the use of the *Afrophobia* term within the EU as noted in the statement by the representative of the EU to the sixteenth session in 2018 of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and in 2019 at recent consultations in Geneva on programmes relating to people of African descent.

It is our hope that the above mentioned important developments testifying to a broad recognition of the *Afrophobia* term will facilitate a consensus process towards positive action at the Human Rights Council and for strengthened activities in this regard by the OHCHR.

The full restoration within the United Nations of a term reflecting the special and unique form of discrimination faced by people of African descent is long overdue and should be given priority on a system wide basis.

Anti-black racism targeted against people of African descent was the first form of discrimination to be given a name when the term “*Negrophobia*” was introduced in the

United States in the 1830s and used in the campaigns against slavery and for racial equality. “Negrophobia” for example predated the appearance of “anti-Semitism” term by many decades. Afrophobia is only a modernized, broadened and more comprehensive and inclusive form of the older outdated term and which cover the entirety of racism and discrimination against people of African descent.

In the United Nations the “negrophobia” term was first included in the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to “examine according to his mandate incidents of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, any form of discrimination against Blacks, Arabs and Muslims, xenophobia, negrophobia, anti-Semitism, and related intolerance” as adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its fiftieth session in 1994. The “negrophobia” term disappeared in connection with the World Conference Against Racism and its early follow up for the only reason that any term including “negro” had become totally outdated and unacceptable, in particular in the English language. While the replacement of “negrophobia” with afrophobia was discussed in that connection, it did not take place and therefore deprived people of African descent the recognition it had previously had in listings of existing forms of discrimination. It is therefore a timely measure that the Human Rights Council and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent as well as the High Commissioner for Human Rights has taken to reintroduce this recognition of the special and unique form of discrimination that people of African descent face.

Regrettably there has been some ill-considered efforts by some groups to undermine and question the active use of the Afrophobia term in the UN system despite the high degree of recognition it has received from People of African Descent, NGOs, Governments, Human Rights Council Special Procedures, High Commissioner for Human Rights and many other actors. In this connection it must be stressed that the Afrophobia term now has a track record of helping to energize the combat of racism against People of African Descent and to direct increased attention to the full achievement of their human rights. No other single word term has been presented to fulfill the same function.

It would be appropriate and a high priority that the existing Human Rights Council recognition of the Afrophobia term be strengthened and further developed by the Human Rights Council in a resolution at its 41st session.

The Human Rights Council should give high priority at its 41st session to implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and effectively and in good faith implementing the Programme of Activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent. The adoption by the Human Rights Council of a multiyear programme for global DDPA outreach and mobilization would be of utmost importance as it has been repeatedly requested by the General Assembly. Of great importance is that the General Assembly in its resolution 73/262 adopted on 22 December 2018 has explicitly asked the Human Rights Council to act on the matter of the DDPA multiyear outreach programme.

Recognizing and combating Afrophobia will significantly contribute to the full implementation of the important UN programmes against racism.

The World Against Racism Network (WARN) also share the views expressed in this statement.