



# International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Distr.: General  
27 November 2015

Original: English

---

## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Eighty-eighth session

### Summary record (partial)\* of the 2391st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 23 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Cali Tzay

## Contents

Opening of the session

Tribute to the memory of the victims of recent terrorist attacks

Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Adoption of the agenda

---

\* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

---

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of the present document* to the English Translation Section, room E.6040, Palais des Nations, Geneva (trad\_sec\_eng@unog.ch).

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.



*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Opening of the session**

1. **The Chair** declared open the eighty-eighth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. He said that the year 2015 marked both the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention and the start of the International Decade for People of African Descent. He was very appreciative of the work carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), particularly with regard to the rights of indigenous peoples. He deplored the continuing international crisis, which had seen violent attacks launched in several countries. The Convention was now more relevant than ever, and the Committee would do everything possible to denounce situations of racially motivated violence in a timely manner.

**Tribute to the memory of the victims of recent terrorist attacks**

2. **The Chair** paid tribute to the victims of the recent wave of violence and terrorist attacks around the world, including in France, Lebanon, Mali and Nigeria.
3. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

**Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

4. **Mr. Al Hussein** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the international community, faced with an accumulation of crises, was hurtling towards the unknown and had thus far not managed to place the interests of human beings above narrower national interests. A dangerous resurgence of ethnic nationalism was taking place and, in their efforts to fight terrorism, Governments were cutting corners and fuelling resentment against minority ethnic groups. He commended the Committee on its work to defend the rights of groups such as the Dalits and the Roma and on its courage to tackle issues that most people were unwilling to talk about.

5. He acknowledged the high quality of the work carried out by the Committee and by OHCHR, but feared that it was insufficient given the scale of the current challenges. Governments were shirking their responsibilities and were using minority groups as scapegoats for economic problems. The World Bank must amend its policies to ensure that indigenous populations did not suffer at the hands of Governments. He hoped that the anniversary of the Convention would provide the necessary momentum to speed up the pace of change and ensure that Governments fulfilled their obligations as duty bearers rather than stoking the basest human instincts for the sake of narrow political gain.

6. Laws alone were insufficient to resolve the global crises that were unfolding. Education and a change in cultural attitudes were also needed, and bringing about such change was one of the greatest challenges facing the international community. Despite the horrific attacks that had been carried out and the sense that the current system was clearly broken, OHCHR would seek to remain optimistic and to have faith in the human spirit and rational thinking. The international system was not working in its own best interests, as States were unable to look beyond their own narrow interests to tackle broader issues such as sustainability and climate change. Careful and thorough thought needed to be given to what should be done differently, and the Committee, which had a keen perception of changing patterns in discrimination, had a key role to play in those reflections.

7. **The Chair** invited one Committee member from each of the five regional groupings represented within its membership to respond to the High Commissioner's opening statement.

8. **Mr. Diaconu** said that he appreciated the frank and direct nature of the statements that the High Commissioner had made before various bodies, including the Human Rights Council. He also acknowledged the High Commissioner's dedication to ensuring respect for human rights in all regions of the world.

9. In its 50 years of existence, the Convention had become a living instrument thanks to the Committee's proactive and energetic work to ensure protection for vulnerable groups. Cultural grounds, which were sometimes used to incite racial discrimination, must instead be used to combat such discrimination: that was the reasoning behind the Committee's efforts to promote cultural diversity. The Committee was very appreciative of the excellent work done by the secretariat, and it would continue its engagement with States until all forms of racial discrimination had been eradicated.

10. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** said he agreed that the efforts made thus far to address the current crises had been insufficient. For its part, the Committee fostered intercultural dialogue that was helping to eliminate xenophobia and racial discrimination in society.

11. Indigenous peoples and people of African descent in particular were vulnerable to the looming environmental challenges, including those relating to climate change, biodiversity and natural resources. It was therefore very important to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals were achieved. The many encouraging initiatives being taken to promote the rights of people of African descent, including by the Organization of American States, would give important impetus to the effort to combat racial discrimination.

12. **Mr. Vázquez** said that striking a proper balance between fighting terrorism and protecting vulnerable groups and minorities was an immense challenge and quite rightly one of the highest priorities of both the Committee and OHCHR. Ensuring that human rights were respected, as the High Commissioner himself had once noted, often depended as much on the prevalence of the right cultural attitudes as it did on the adoption of the right laws, and for that reason he urged the High Commissioner to make outreach a high priority, too.

13. **Mr. Kemal**, endorsing his colleagues' remarks, said that the Committee would very much welcome greater support from the High Commissioner for additional human resources to be allocated to the Committee. The Human Rights Treaties Division of OHCHR and the secretariat had worked wonders, but additional resources would make it possible to do still more. He stressed that treaty body members past and present were an invaluable resource, particularly in view of the current budgetary constraints.

14. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that, as a first-generation Mauritian, he wished to acknowledge his colleagues from Africa in the United Nations system and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Africa had seen human rights abuses and endured calamities, some of which were ongoing. It should be kept in mind, however, that pan-Africanism, as a concept, was barely 50 years old, which was but a blink of an eye in the life of a continent. One outgrowth of that movement, the African Governance Architecture, showed particular promise.

15. **Mr. Al Hussein** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that he had been struck by the realization that it was unusual for a person to be a

victim only once. People who fled war-torn countries were likely to be victimized over and over throughout their journeys to safety.

16. Addressing Mr. Kemal's remarks, he said that the underfunding of human rights work relative to other areas was a chronic problem. The total value of the world's capital markets came to some US\$ 136 trillion, and yet it was impossible to secure even US\$ 100 billion for the Sustainable Development Goals. It was unclear to him what investors intended to do with their money if the world was spinning out of control. Priorities had to be rearranged, as it seemed that budgets for human rights work were cut whenever Governments were short of money. In 2011, Egypt and Tunisia had been well on their way towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but then turmoil erupted. It was thus clear to him that development must be accompanied by changes that gave people a greater sense of dignity.

17. The monetary contributions made to the work of human rights organizations by the 50 countries with the highest gross domestic product did not square with those countries' repeated declarations of support for the human rights agenda. Resources, including human resources, therefore had to be found elsewhere, and OHCHR would step up efforts in that regard.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda (CERD/C/88/1)**

18. **Ms. Dah** said that she wished to draw the secretariat's attention to the need for a final item entitled "Miscellaneous" in any provisional agenda submitted to the Committee. The item could be skipped if no one wished to propose any miscellaneous business.

19. **The Chair** said he would take it that, if there were no further comments, the Committee members wished to adopt the agenda.

20. *The agenda was adopted.*

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.05 a.m.*