



# General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

**57**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Friday, 19 March 2021, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Bozkir . . . . . (Turkey)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

of African Descent, in accordance with paragraph 42 of resolution 75/237, of 31 December 2020.

## Agenda item 7 (continued)

### Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

#### Draft decision A/75/L.67

**The President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/75/L.67, entitled “Participation in formal plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.” May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt the draft decision?

*Draft decision A/75/L.67 was adopted (decision 75/558).*

**The President:** The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 7.

### Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

#### Agenda item 70 (continued)

### Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

**The President:** The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 70 to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and to hold a debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People

### Statement by the President

**The President:** In 1966, the General Assembly recognized our collective shortcomings in our pursuit “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women”, as enshrined in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations (see A/PV.1452). Thus the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was created through the adoption of resolution 2142 (XXI). Yet here we are, 55 years later, and racial discrimination continues to exist.

The past year has been a painful one for many people of African descent around the world. Violence was filmed, voices broke silence and the virus took hold. The General Assembly noted in resolution 74/270 that there is no place for any form of discrimination, racism or xenophobia in the response to the pandemic. However, there has been a rise in hate speech and intolerance over the past year. Xenophobic and anti-Asian attacks and hate speech have increased during the pandemic, with tragic consequences. Furthermore, reports indicate that people of African descent often have unequal access to medical care and are vulnerable to higher rates of infection and related mortality from coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In some contexts, people of African descent are twice as likely as their peers to die as a result of COVID-19. For those who recover from the effects of the virus, the cost of health care and the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic threaten to push

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21-06958 (E)



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people of African descent into poverty. When health-care and other systems, such as justice, housing and education, fail people of African descent, it perpetuates injustices and inequalities. We simply will not meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 10 or indeed realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole if we leave people of African descent behind.

Being subjected to racial discrimination is a deeply personal experience, one to which some of us truly cannot relate. We need to listen to and learn from those who are willing to share their experiences. We need to consider the impact of policies on those most vulnerable. No one should be constrained from living a life of their choosing for any reason, and certainly not because of the colour of their skin.

The people we serve are looking to us to uphold the principles of the United Nations. We need to take urgent action now if we are to correct our course. It has been two decades since the world acknowledged, through the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the ongoing victimization of people of African descent. To that end, I trust that the Assembly will support the Permanent Representatives of Portugal and of South Africa, who will serve as co-facilitators for the modalities of the high-level meeting on the occasion of the twentieth commemoration of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the political declaration. I am sure that the timely recommendations of the presidential statement of the Economic and Social Council special ministerial meeting and the forthcoming report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on systemic racism and its recommendations will guide us on the path forward.

I look forward to meeting members again in May on the occasion of the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent, which will provide an opportunity for honest reflection on past failures and ongoing challenges, and for seeking reconciliation. That is essential if we are to create a more just and equal world for all. Furthermore, the Permanent Representatives of Chad and Costa Rica will, in their capacities as co-facilitators, convene consultations on the modalities, format and substantive procedural aspects for a permanent forum on people of African descent. I trust that we will soon see a conclusion to those consultations, which will establish a platform for starting consultations on a draft United Nations declaration on the fundamental rights of people of African descent.

The onus is on each of us to uphold the fundamental human rights of everyone, everywhere. It is a shameful sign for society today that this needs to be said, but it does. Let me say here today in the General Assembly: black lives matter.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

**The Secretary-General:** I am pleased to join you for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, commemorating the day in 1960 when police in South Africa killed 69 people who were part of a peaceful demonstration against racist apartheid laws.

Today apartheid lies dead, but sadly racism lives on in all regions and all societies, and much of today's racism is deeply entrenched in centuries of colonialism and enslavement. We see it in the pervasive discrimination and exclusion suffered by people of African descent. We see it in the injustices and oppression endured by indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities. We see it in the repugnant views of white supremacists and other extremist groups. We see racism and discrimination in anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, the mistreatment of some minority Christian communities and other forms of intolerance and xenophobia. And we see racism in the recent abhorrent violence against people of Asian descent, unjustly blamed for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We also see it in the biases built into the codes for facial recognition and artificial intelligence.

Last year, people around the globe took to the streets to protest racial injustice. They recognized racism for what it is — a vicious global pandemic, dangerous, abhorrent, ugly and everywhere. Racism is a deeply rooted evil. It transcends generations and contaminates societies. It perpetuates inequality, oppression and marginalization. Our duty, as responsible global citizens, is to eradicate it. Wherever we see racism, we must condemn it without reservation, hesitation or qualification. That includes looking into our own hearts and minds. Each of us needs to ask: Am I and my society racist? And what must I do to correct it?

Addressing racism is not a one-time exercise. Racism is a complex cultural phenomenon. To fight it, we have to be proactively anti-racist. That is why last year I launched a system-wide discussion led by the United Nations Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All. Part of its efforts are to engage staff on issues related to racism, conscious

and unconscious bias, and how to create an anti-racist United Nations Organization. That is a responsibility we all share and a problem all of society must confront.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. It offers an important opportunity to make an honest assessment of where we stand and where we need to go. Racism manifests itself in many forms, conscious and unconscious. Combating it demands action every day, at every level. It is especially important to recognize that historical injustices have contributed to poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and instability for people and countries alike.

It is time to acknowledge and repair long-standing wrongs and reverse their consequences. Reparative justice is essential to reconciliation, the prevention of conflict and the creation of societies based on fairness, equality, respect and solidarity. It can help mend the social contract between people and the State. And as societies become ever more multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural, we need greater political, cultural and economic investment in inclusivity and cohesion. We need to harness the benefits of diversity rather than perceiving it as a threat.

This year, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlights the important role of youth. They have been at the forefront of the fight against racism. Young people's attitudes and behaviour will dictate the future shape and look of our societies. Only by understanding and rejecting this deep-rooted phenomenon can we end it. So today I appeal to young people everywhere, as well as all leaders and educators. Let us teach the world that all people are born equal. Supremacy is an evil lie. Racism kills. On this day, and every day, let us work together to rid the world of the pernicious evil of racism so that all may live in a world of peace, dignity and opportunity.

**The President:** In accordance with decision 75/558 of 19 March 2021, I now invite the Assembly to view a pre-recorded statement by Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

*A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (see A/75/825).*

**The President:** Before proceeding further, and as announced in my letter dated 16 March 2021, I would

like to consult members on inviting Mr. Uzodinma Iweala, author and Chief Executive Officer of the Africa Center, to make a statement as an eminent personality active in the struggle against racial discrimination, in accordance with paragraph 42 of resolution 75/237.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite Mr. Iweala to make a statement this morning?

*It was so decided (decision 75/559).*

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Iweala.

**Mr. Iweala:** Before I continue I would like to just take a moment in solidarity with our Asian brothers and sisters following the attack in Atlanta, Georgia, this week.

It is quite an honour to be here and invited to offer words on this incredibly special day. My name is Uzodinma Iweala, and I am Chief Executive Officer of the Africa Center here in New York, one of the few, if not only, multidisciplinary institutions committed to shaping narratives about Africa and its people in ways that have a positive impact on the continent and all of our lives. We believe that through the thoughtful contemplation and exploration of the ways in which economics, policy and culture intersect as related to Africa and its diaspora, we can find ways to improve the conditions of Africa's 1.34 billion people and, by extension, everyone in the world. We are proud to be central to this work and to serve as a platform for related dialogue about race, inclusivity and uniting our global community.

While I am very honoured to be here, it is a painful thing for an African man — a Nigerian and American man, to be specific — to remember, commemorate and contemplate the 69 lives taken by police during the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. That day, it is estimated that as many as 10,000 peaceful protesters marched to the township's police station as they joined their fellow black South Africans in the decades-long fight against apartheid. For me, the most solemn aspect of commemorating this day 52 years later is that Ian Berry's images capturing the tragedy of the events of 21 March 1960 could easily be ones from around the world in 2020, indeed from the entirety of the past decade, not just from more than 60 years ago.

Over the past 10 years, and rising to a fever pitch in 2020, millions of people around the world of all

ethnicities, races, genders and ages have taken to the streets to proclaim that black life and black lives matter. Though “black lives matter” were not the words used in Sharpeville that day, this was the general sentiment of the protesters. And as they took their pleas for full recognition and the protection of their human rights to the people sworn to protect them, they were violently attacked instead, much as the protesters in the streets of New York City; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Seattle, Washington; Ferguson, Missouri, and other cities across the United States and the world have been as well.

We cannot fully acknowledge the roots of racism without understanding the ways in which it is structured within our institutions. The ways in which police officers historically and continually interact with people who are black and brown, as opposed to those who are white, can certainly be seen as personal. Individual officers can always make a different decision, right? But the answer is more complicated than that. When we see inequitable treatment meted out to people of different races under the law and under a system of governance, the alignment is to an idea, one that is often unspoken in our public places, but consistently expressed through individual and collective actions and certainly experienced in their results. That idea is that somehow the colour of people’s skin should subject them to inhumane treatment by a system within which they live.

Painful as it is to recognize, that idea of white supremacy is a building block for many global systems — even ones that seek peace and mutual understanding — and that can have a corrosive effect on their ability to function. It is a belief in the idea of supremacy — white, religious, ethnic or whatever — that feeds unfair systems that make certain peoples feel entitled to a greater portion of our planet’s shared resources and absolves them of any responsibility to act to make life liveable for all. We will never see progress on the most intense global challenges we face today as long as racism prevents true cooperation. I will say it a different way so the Assembly can really hear me, and I am not a diplomat, so please forgive my directness. If we do not act, racism will kill us all. We have to understand and acknowledge that those systems, those incredibly powerful structures that govern the way we operate, are based on that idea. Because of our complicated and interconnected histories of colonialism, subjugation, violence and resistance, we all are the affected and

those who affect. We all share the responsibility of making sure that the ways in which racism shows up in our systems, explicitly and implicitly, are seen, confronted and checked so that we can use our energy for bolder and brighter pursuits. We have seen the death and destruction caused by racism for far too long. If we do not act, racism will kill us all.

I appreciate that the theme of this year’s International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is focused on youth, because as we know, it is usually the young people who are at the forefront of the movements to change the systems to which we have all become accustomed. It is their youth, their inexperience and unwillingness to conform to what is unfair that keeps this fight going. Young people fighting against racism will always be the present and the future. They are the antidote to the centuries-old poison that people deserve less because of the colour of their skin. We are all born knowing better. Sadly, sometimes it is our age that gets the best of us. We have to support the young ones who can remind us of our shared humankind. If we do not support them, racism will kill us all.

My challenge today, to everyone in this Hall and everyone listening to or watching this speech, is that we must remember that there is no act of fighting racism that is too small. It happens in our living rooms, our coffee shops, our workplaces, our places of worship. It has to happen here, in this great General Assembly Hall and the offices of the United Nations. Each one of us — every day and every moment that we are confronted with the realities of speaking out against racism, standing with each other against hate and living examples of love for one another, and, yes, ourselves — each one of us moves this world towards a better future. As we have seen with the terror attack in Atlanta this week, as we see every time a black person dies in the name of white supremacy, the consequences of not taking a stand can be immediate and tragic. I think we all know what I am going to say. If we do not fight together, racism will kill us all.

As we say in Nigeria, “It is enough already”. I do not want to suffocate in a world enamoured of hate. I want to breathe. I want to breathe in the sweet and rejuvenating air of compassion and cooperation. I want to live fully and fully aware that my life matters, my black life matters. I want to extend the gift of a full, unconstricted life to all people around the world. Will everyone join me?



**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Chad, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

**Mrs. Baroud (Chad):** I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States. At the outset, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this commemorative plenary meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We should point out that more than five years have passed since the international community agreed to implement the International Decade for People of African Descent. It is unfortunate that we still see the effects of contemporary racial discrimination in the inequality and subjugation that result from a failure of the will needed to redress the racism, slavery, apartheid and colonialism that persist. We are aware of the racial prejudice and discrimination that people of African descent still face today.

We take note of the way the international community is addressing those acts. We applaud the progress made at the national, regional and international levels in conformity with the obligation and commitments of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Since the adoption of those documents, we are pleased with the Governments that have adopted landmark progressive legislation and administrative measures to effectively combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. More importantly, we thank all those who appreciate and respect knowledge and the contribution of people of African descent to their economies and to humankind all over the world.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisages a world of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; human dignity; the rule of law; justice, equality and non-discrimination; and for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity, and sets the principles for pursuing those goals. We are of the view that Governments should reinforce protections against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance by ensuring that all people have access to effective and adequate remedies and to competent national tribunals and other national institutions, in order to ensure their right to seek just and adequate reparation and satisfaction for any damage resulting from such discrimination.

We believe that reparations for slavery and colonialism should include not only justice and

accountability for historical wrongs, but also the eradication of the scars of radical inequality, subordination and discrimination accumulated under slavery, apartheid and colonialism. We believe that empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality are the way forward. We affirm that the right of all citizens to a quality education contributes to more inclusive societies and greater equity, including more harmonious relations among nations and individuals, and can foster mutual understanding and respect for cultural diversity and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action further supports the promotion of the full and accurate inclusion of the history and contribution of people of African descent in the education curriculum.

We recognize that traditional livelihoods are under threat in many countries. People are being forced out of their ancestral lands or compelled to migrate to urban areas and are losing access to subsistence farming, fishing and other traditional occupations. The various threats to traditional livelihoods include large-scale infrastructure and development projects, resource extraction and tourism, which often lead to the displacement of communities of African descent. Such communities continue to face significantly unequal access to adequate employment. They often have unemployment rates that are higher than their national average, and they are overrepresented in low-paid jobs. The discriminatory attitudes of some employers prevent them from accessing certain jobs, fair working conditions and equal pay for equal work. And in certain circumstances they are more likely to be employed in positions that do not reflect their education skills. Similarly, unequal access to education and training has forced many people of African descent to work in low-paid manual and service work. We take note of the Secretary-General's report (A/75/561), which affirms that in many countries women and girls of African descent are employed in informal domestic work and are at risk of discrimination, exploitation, violence and abuse. Migrants of African descent are frequently forced to take informal work, which brings low wages and insecurity.

We would like to remind the international community of the commitment it made in 2013, when the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent (see A/68/PV.72), to be implemented from 2015 to 2024 under the theme "People of African descent: recognition, justice

and development". The African Group believes that this decade is a timely and unique opportunity to underline the significant contribution that people of African descent make to their societies and to propose concrete measures to promote equality and combat discrimination of any kind.

We are concerned about the fact that children of African descent continue to face racism or discrimination in schools. Some curricula are designed to include negative stereotypes and images of people of African descent and do not sufficiently portray their histories, cultures and contribution to development. Children of African descent are discriminated against for their cultural or traditional hairstyles and dress codes. They also experience disproportionately discriminatory action and are more likely to be placed in low-achieving classes or groups. All of those factors constitute violations of their fundamental right to an education.

We are implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals. We have to commit to a world of universal respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination.

The Group is of the view that this decade is a historic opportunity to right the wrongs of the past. We need to strengthen our actions to dismantle the many obstacles that millions of people in every region of the world encounter every day. We have to reinforce laws that prohibit racial discrimination and ensure that they are implemented. We should promote greater knowledge of the cultural heritage of people of African descent and the many fundamental contributions that they have made to the advancement of humankind. It is also important to mention that people of African descent can be better empowered in the fields of entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation through programmes targeted to encouraging the formation and growth of micro- and small- and medium-scale enterprises. Capacity-building in languages and business strategies could help to make traditional livelihoods become more competitive and market-oriented. Support should include equal access to financial services, which people of African descent often struggle to secure, owing to discrimination.

The programme of activities for the International Decade urges States to eradicate poverty and exclusion

and enable people of African descent to participate fully and equally throughout their life cycles. We ask States to take specific action to end discrimination against women and girls of African descent. They may also adopt special measures, such as affirmative action in education and employment, to overcome persistent inequalities. We firmly believe that the most important tool for ending discrimination and structural racism in the United Nations is in the staffing of all its entities and processes in terms of numbers and seniority. We call on the Secretary-General and officials at all levels of leadership to adopt a transparent and universally acceptable anti-racist metric in their human resource practices. We are also of the view that committees of experts and analyses of matters to do with Africa should have African experts and institutions at their core. That will help to address the skewed hierarchy of knowledge production that consigns people in the global South to the role of native informants for analysts, even when dealing with challenges that are predominantly located in the global South and particularly in Africa.

Another issue of concern is the fact that racism, xenophobia and discrimination are being consciously and unconsciously built into artificial intelligence and corporate and State development algorithms. We urge all the relevant United Nations forums to give higher priority to developing flexible and practical standards for the development of artificial intelligence and algorithms in line with racial and gender equality and respect for intellectual, cultural and religious diversity.

In conclusion, we affirm our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and the International Decade of People of African Descent, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. We reiterate that a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world is achievable for all if the needs of those in vulnerable situations are met and if victims of human rights violations resulting from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the light of their vulnerabilities are accorded access to justice, effective and appropriate protection, remedies and adequate reparation and satisfaction for any damage as a result of that discrimination.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

**Mr. Ilyassov (Kazakhstan):** Let me begin by stating that the Group of Asia-Pacific States is deeply shocked

by the hate-driven racial killing in Atlanta, the most recent and vivid example of the truth behind the words of our keynote speaker today, which is that if we do not act and unite, racism will kill us all.

It is my great honour, Mr. President, to speak on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group at the commemorative meeting you have convened on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, with its focus on accelerating progress in achieving the goals of the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate that the Group collectively recalls the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and condemns all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as hate speech, hate crimes, violence and hostility. We also reiterate that the Asia-Pacific Group is fully committed to the three objectives of the International Decade — recognition, justice and development — which should be more robustly pursued in the Decade's remaining five years.

The Asia-Pacific region is made up of 55 countries with very distinctive demographic features. It includes some of the world's largest and smallest countries, encompasses 56 per cent of the total global population and covers 22 per cent of the earth's surface, stretching across vast territorial expanses. Our populations are therefore very diverse and represent an intersection of all the world's ethnic groups, races, religions and cultures. Our countries are committed to justice and equality for all and to ensuring that the dictum of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — to leave no one behind — is applied to all of humankind. We are ready to work with others to address existing national and international inequalities by working on pragmatic measures such as fulfilling the 2030 Agenda and implementing the various General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions aimed at establishing a democratic and equitable global order. That is particularly critical in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease pandemic. It is therefore crucial to work on debt sustainability and relief and to bring about the greater participation of developing countries in the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and other international organizations so as to promote fair multilateral trade and a global economy, with a special focus on landlocked developing

countries, least developed countries, and small island developing States.

Just as essential are educational and public awareness activities to fight far-right prejudice, stigma and harmful stereotypes, in coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, its special rapporteurs, the Human Rights Council and the United Nations Department of Global Communications. The members of the Asia-Pacific Group will continue their efforts to implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to draft and adopt documents leading to the achievement of the long-term goal of establishing a permanent forum on people of African descent, with the possibility of setting up a voluntary trust fund.

In our interconnected world, social media has been used as a platform for amplifying racial hatred and discriminatory ideas. Unchecked, that trend could pose a challenge to social cohesion all around the world. States must intensify their efforts to prevent and combat racial hatred and discrimination. We also need to carry out effective outreach efforts aimed at enhancing national and international awareness of the legacies of racial discrimination rooted in slavery and colonialism.

In conclusion, the Asia-Pacific Group will continue to be a steady partner in multilateral efforts to combat all forms of racism, injustice and discrimination and to build a society that honours, respects and upholds the dignity of all races.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

**Mr. Pary Rodríguez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

At the outset, allow me to express our deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting of the Assembly to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which has been observed annually since 1966. I would like to thank the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chief Executive Officer of the Africa Center for their participation in today's meeting.

In 2020, the commemorative meeting of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was postponed due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Exactly one year ago, the pandemic manifested itself as a major global challenge, not only because it resulted in serious illness and death for people around the world, but also because it triggered a global economic recession that worsened poverty and had a disproportionate effect on people in vulnerable situations. Developing countries have been hardest hit, which has further exacerbated inequalities within and among our countries.

This difficult situation has made it clear that there is much to be done to completely eradicate all forms of racial discrimination, racism and xenophobia. The elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance must be a priority in our work as an organization. We deplore the current and resurgent scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in many regions of the world, which often target migrants and refugees, as well as people of African descent, and we are concerned about the fact that some political leaders and parties have supported such an environment. We reaffirm the commitments made at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the need to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which prescribes comprehensive measures for combating racism of all kinds. We also reaffirm our support for the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 68/237.

We must recognize that tolerance of cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversities is an essential element for sustainable peace, understanding and friendship among peoples, nations, cultures and individuals. Furthermore, we recognize that women are disproportionately affected by and suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including racial and gender discrimination. For that reason, the members of GRULAC believe that the United Nations and the international community must accelerate action to achieve gender equality, women's full and equal and meaningful participation, and the empowerment of women and girls throughout their lives and in all arenas.

States have undertaken numerous efforts and initiatives to address racial discrimination and segregation, xenophobia and related intolerance and

to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights, of all persons, without distinction of any kind. Regrettably, despite those efforts, millions of human beings continue to be victims of racism, discrimination, xenophobia, hate speech and related intolerance, including their current forms and manifestations, some of which have been expressed in extremely violent ways. Moreover, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination. Our commitment must leave no one behind. Indeed, no one must be left behind, and we must not forget that sustainable development can be achieved only when it is enjoyed by everyone.

Our region is multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual. Our countries are made up of diverse populations from different ethnic backgrounds, including indigenous peoples who continue to face racism and discrimination. This diversity is our strength and our wealth. We therefore affirm that the human rights of people in all their diversity must be respected and protected. We urge States to enhance cooperation and partnership to promote tolerance and inclusion and respect for diversity, in order to achieve a common space between and within civilizations to address common challenges to humankind that threaten their shared values and universal human rights.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that only by working together in solidarity can we effectively address the consequences and all the global challenges of our time. In our diversity we must remain interconnected and show solidarity and respect for everyone.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

**Mr. Hawke (New Zealand):** I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Today's meeting is an important reminder that more than 50 years after the adoption of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, issues of racism and xenophobia are still prevalent across the world. While we have achieved great progress since the Convention's



adoption in 1965, the past year has shown us that all too often, individuals, societies and Governments resort to intolerance, racism, discrimination and xenophobia, particularly in times of fear and crisis.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis has affected everyone, but not everyone has been affected to the same extent. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed social and political fractures within communities as we have witnessed racialized and discriminatory responses to fear. It has also spotlighted and amplified existing inequalities between persons belonging to different groups. Most significantly, the effects of COVID-19 have had a disproportionate impact on indigenous peoples as well as all who belong to other racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic minority groups. It has also highlighted how racial discrimination intersects with other forms of prejudice. In some places, such individuals have had an increased risk of exposure to the virus along with a lower level of access to health care. Furthermore, the people most likely to be affected by the health crisis are also the ones who are suffering the most from the resulting economic downturn. We have regrettably witnessed the spread of the virus leading to a spread of disinformation, xenophobia and racism against people belonging to minority and marginalized groups worldwide, including foreigners and those at risk of multiple types of discrimination.

Racism is not a new phenomenon. However, the COVID-19 crisis has laid bare its shocking extent and impact. We can never be tolerant of people resorting to racism and xenophobia. With regard to this year's theme, we would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all who have stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The commitment to change witnessed in the past year's anti-racism protest movements is powerful, and we must build on that to address systemic discrimination and racism in our societies throughout our law-enforcement and justice institutions, our health systems, our economies and our political systems.

It is our view that diversity, understanding and respect are key building blocks for peace and prosperity. Ignorance breeds intolerance. We must jointly commit to building a global culture based on mutual understanding and dialogue, inclusive of the full range of different perspectives, while celebrating diversity of thought, history and belief. Our commitment to respecting, promoting and protecting human rights must be the foundation on which we act. Together we must

build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. We must build a future that promotes inclusion, diversity and dialogue, and a future in which all people within society are empowered as equals and where racism is a thing of the past.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the host country, the United States of America.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to commemorate this important day, and I thank the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mr. Iweala for their leadership in pressing all of us to do more to eliminate racial discrimination, wherever and by whomever it is perpetrated.

This meeting — this commemoration — is personal to me. I am a person of African descent. But more importantly, I am a descendant of slaves. My great-grandmother Mary Thomas, born in 1865, was the child of a slave. That is just three generations back from me. I grew up in the segregated southern United States. I was bused to a segregated school, and on weekends the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses on lawns in our neighbourhood. When I was in high school, I was asked by a little girl for whom I babysat if I was an N-word, because her dad had used that word for me.

I know the ugly face of racism. I live racism. I have experienced racism. And I have survived racism. And through that process I learned a simple truth. Racism is not the problem of the person who experiences it. Those of us who experience racism cannot and should not internalize it, despite the impact that it can have on our everyday lives. We must face it down every time, no matter whom it is directed at. Racism is the problem of the racist, and it is the problem of the society that produces the racist. In today's world, that is every society, and in so many of our communities and countries racism is endemic. It is built in, like rot in a frame, and it remains, festers and spreads because many of those in charge allow it to do so. Others look away and pretend that it is not there, but like a cancer, if ignored, it grows.

Today we commemorate our joint commitment to ending all racial discrimination, and we take stock of our efforts during the mid-term review of the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024. In America, conducting that review requires a reckoning

with our dark history of chattel slavery. Some 400 years ago, African slaves were forced onto the shores of the colony of Virginia. Two years ago, the 1619 Project brought attention to that anniversary and put the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans back at the centre of our history and our national narrative. As the Project detailed, slavery is the original sin of America. It has woven white supremacy and black inferiority into our founding documents and principles. The Legacy Museum in Alabama traces that history, and I encourage anyone who has not been there to take a trip and visit it. Its exhibits draw a direct line from slavery to lynchings, to segregation and to mass incarceration, and testify to that terrible history and the impact it is having on our people today.

But even though slavery is our original sin, America is not the original source of slavery. Others share that shame with us. Slavery has existed in every corner of the globe. Africans enslaved fellow Africans long before the American colonists existed. And sadly, in many places around the world slavery still exists today. As the scholar Isabel Wilkerson argues, humans in all contexts have ranked human value, pitting the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of others. In America, that takes many forms. Chief among them is our legacy of white supremacy. This year, the senseless killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many other Black Americans sparked a reckoning with racial justice, a movement that spread across the world: Black Lives Matter. And because black lives matter, we need to dismantle white supremacy at every turn. That means looking at other kinds of hate, too.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has reported a spike in hate crimes over the past three years, particularly against Latino Americans, Sikhs, Muslim Americans, Jewish Americans and immigrants. The most recent data shows hate crimes rising to a level not seen in more than a decade. And that does not even capture the bullying, discrimination, brutality and violence that Asian Americans have faced since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The mass shooting in Atlanta is only the latest example of that horror. At President Biden's direction, we at the United States Permanent Mission to the United Nations are flying our flag at half-staff to honour the victims of this terrible, senseless tragedy. It is so important that we stand together, united against this scourge. In unity

we have strength, while divisions and misperceptions about each other work against all of us.

We also need to recognize that racism is far from unique to America. Across four decades and four continents in the Foreign Service, I experienced racism in countless international contexts — from overzealous searches at airports, to the racial profiling of my son by police, to being made to wait behind white patrons for a table at a restaurant. Racism continues to be a daily challenge wherever we are. And for millions, it is more than a challenge. It is deadly — as in Burma, where Rohingya and others have been oppressed, abused and killed in staggering numbers, or China, where the Government has committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang.

The prevalence and pervasiveness of racial discrimination might make the situation look hopeless. But let me be clear. I remain hopeful because I have seen how communities and countries can enact change, and I have experienced that progress in my own lifetime. I am just one example of what hope and strength can do. After all, this descendant of slaves is standing before the Assembly today as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Considering the first chapter of my life story — born in poverty to uneducated parents — that could not have been predicted. So I ask, what can we do to promote change and keep hope alive for victims of racism? We cannot control the hate in people's hearts. But we can change the rules that give them licence. That is why I am sitting here, why we were able to welcome Vice President Kamala Harris to the United Nations this week and why President Biden's Cabinet is the most diverse in United States history and includes the first Native American ever named to a Cabinet post.

We can make our communities and our Governments reflect our highest aspirations, even if some individuals still fall short. We can act. And in the Biden-Harris Administration, we are doing just that. In his first 60 days, the President has made that a priority — from redressing racial discrimination in housing, to ending private prisons that warehouse young Black and brown men, to respecting the sovereignty of Native American tribes and combating xenophobia and discrimination against Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The Biden-Harris Administration also recognizes how the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis

has been disproportionately damaging to members of racial and ethnic minorities. That is why we have taken steps such as providing emergency relief funds, increasing access to nutritious food and passing federal student loan payments that we know will particularly help Black and brown communities. To be clear, that is just the beginning. Ending racial discrimination, particularly in our criminal justice system, will be an ongoing top priority for the President and for the entire Biden-Harris Administration. And we ask that other countries join us.

We have called for all countries to ratify and implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. After all, this is about shaping the future we want for our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren. Already they are demanding that we do better. They are coming up with new ideas and pushing for progressive action. They are asking more from their politicians and their Governments, and they are in the streets, marching for change. They say that black lives matter — because they do. They chant, “This is what democracy looks like” — because it is. That is the American way. We have flaws, deep, serious flaws, but we talk about them, work to address them and press on in hopes that we can leave the country better than we found it.

We can do the same on a multilateral scale. Let us expose the racism and racial discrimination endemic in every society around the globe. Let us press forward to root out that discrimination and remove the rot from our foundations. And on this day, dedicated to ending racial discrimination, as our flags fly at half-staff, let us leave our children a less hateful, more hopeful world. Let us give them a future — a future without fear or violence. That is the legacy that I hope they can inherit.

**The President:** The Secretary-General has to leave us for another engagement. I thank him for taking the time to be with us this morning.

I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica, who will speak on behalf of the Central American Integration System.

**Mr. Carazo** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the member States of the Central American Integration System (SICA) — Belize, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and my own country, Costa Rica — allow me to express our heartfelt gratitude for the convening of this timely meeting for much-

needed reflection. We also thank the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their statements.

The member States of SICA join in commemorating 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in an affirmation that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and as a testament to their determination to promote the full inclusion of all persons in our societies — regardless of their race, nationality or ethnic origin — in order to achieve a region and a world free of racial discrimination.

Our region is made up of multi-ethnic and multicultural populations. Our societies benefit from the richness of the diversity of our peoples. We recognize that fostering the full participation and contribution of all our peoples is an important step towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, the countries of our region firmly believe that sustainable development cannot be achieved unless it benefits all people. However, the reality for many human beings is that their ability to fully enjoy their human rights depends on their race, ethnicity, nationality or migratory status. Our region rejects all forms of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and related intolerance.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination provides us with a legal basis for adopting

“all necessary measures for speedily eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, and to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices”.

However, the relevance of that legal instrument hinges on our moral duty as States to go beyond its provisions and take a proactive approach to the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

We in our region note that racism is a concern for all peoples and countries, and that it is the responsibility of the international community to contribute to its eradication in every possible way. We are concerned about the fact that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance continue to have a negative impact on people’s full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development and the promotion of strategies,

programmes, policies and national legislation conducive to the full enjoyment of their rights.

The member States of SICA condemn in the strongest terms the current and resurgent scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in many regions of the world, and commit to taking concrete measures to prevent and condemn such actions. In Central America there are an estimated 30 groups of people of African descent, representing 18 per cent of the total population of the region. As such, the inclusion of people of African descent is important if our societies are to be more just and equitable. We are therefore committed to promoting the implementation of public policies and national and local development strategies that help to improve the living conditions of Afro-descendant people and communities by incorporating gender, intercultural, intergenerational and intersectional perspectives that enable us to address the specific needs of women of African descent. We believe that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are manifested in specific ways where women and girls are concerned, and we recognize the need to incorporate women fully and effectively in the fight against racism.

Our countries recognize that human rights education and respect for and the promotion of cultural diversity play a pivotal role in preventing and eliminating racism and racial discrimination, and that affirmative action is necessary to reduce and remedy disparities and inequalities, including measures to accelerate social inclusion and close gaps in access to education and employment, as well as measures to promote access to justice and ensure that people of African descent can effectively enjoy their right to access justice within their judicial systems.

We also reiterate our unwavering commitment to the International Decade for People of African Descent, proclaimed by the United Nations on the basis of recognition, justice and development, in order to ensure the full realization of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent. Furthermore, our countries welcome the decision to convene this meeting in the General Assembly in order to establish during its seventy-fifth session a permanent forum on people of African descent, so as to enable broad public and civil-society participation in dialogue with States and other relevant actors for the fulfilment of the rights of people of African descent. Our countries are committed to pursuing State goals

and actions within the framework of the Decade for its remaining years. We call on the United Nations system and international and regional organizations, and invite civil society, the private sector and all actors to fully commit to this endeavour and to intensify their efforts to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In addition, we call for an increase in the allocation of resources within the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the programme of action and activities of the Decade. Our region is committed to continuing efforts and strengthening cooperation with all States Members of the United Nations to combat racial discrimination and all forms of discrimination.

In my national capacity, I would like to refer to the statement of Mrs. Ammo Aziza Baroud, Permanent Representative of Chad, speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, and specifically to her references to the people of African descent who live in our societies and their development. The debt we owe them is a great one, and so must our efforts be if we are to repay that debt. We also welcome the opportunity to work with Ambassador Baroud to facilitate the implementation of resolution 73/262, on establishing a permanent forum on people of African descent within the United Nations system.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

**Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal):** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

I am pleased to address the General Assembly as we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which serves as a reminder that issues related to racism and xenophobia persist in all corners of the world and that it is the shared duty of all Member States to promote and protect human rights, including by combating discrimination and violence against persons on the basis of their race.

Racism is a global scourge. No country or region is free from the phenomenon and we have an obligation to act to eliminate it. The ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and has disproportionately affected people in vulnerable situations. The EU supports the effective implementation of the Secretary-General's call to action on human



rights, as well as his leadership in placing human rights at the core of the response to the pandemic.

The existence of racial discrimination is an obstacle to people's full and effective enjoyment of human rights, renders democracy fragile and creates barriers to the full and effective participation of all persons in political and public life. In the European Union, discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin is prohibited, and we take action to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination, bearing in mind the motto of the EU — United in Diversity.

In that connection, the first European Anti-Racism Summit is taking place today, a kick-off moment for the implementation of the EU anti-racism action plan announced in September. The EU will continue to strongly oppose all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. We reject all forms of incitement to violence and hatred and hate speech, online or offline.

Racism in all its forms must be tackled in a comprehensive way by taking effective measures at the national, regional and international levels, in particular through the ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which remains the universal foundation for efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate racism.

**Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination should be a day of reflection. Greater political will and strengthened international cooperation are essential to achieving the goals set at the historic World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban 20 years ago. However, we are seeing a disturbing wave of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and hate speech against migrants and people of African descent.

For Cuba, it is a source of pride that we are a mono-ethnic and multiracial nation, which is a strength of our national identity. We are a country with Indo-American, European, African and Asian blood. The vast majority of our population are of mixed race, as are our traditions, customs, religious beliefs and popular culture. Since the triumph of the revolution, our country has undergone a period of radical transformation aimed

at eliminating the underlying causes of racism and institutionalized racial discrimination. The range of measures adopted on the legal, economic, educational, cultural and social fronts during six decades of the revolution have made it possible to achieve significant results in combating racism and discrimination.

However, despite our considerable progress, racial prejudices persist in some people's behaviour and attitudes. For that reason, and so as to have a comprehensive instrument to resolve the issue, in November 2019 we adopted a national programme against racism and racial discrimination, to be coordinated by a governmental commission headed by the President of Cuba. Its objectives include identifying the causes of discrimination and possible action to be taken both according to region and the various social sectors, promoting and raising awareness of our African heritage and encouraging public debate on racial issues, as well as their visibility in the media. Those efforts are in line with our obligations as a State party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the commitments undertaken in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the shared objective of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

**Mr. Taborat** (Indonesia): My delegation is pleased to participate in this commemorative meeting to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the light of the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent, as stipulated in resolution 75/237 of 2020.

Indonesia acknowledges the great significance of this event. Our meeting is taking place against a backdrop of emerging racism and racial discrimination that is fostered by irresponsible use of the Internet, which zealots exploit to disseminate racist and xenophobic messages. In that regard, it is concerning to note that the international community does not lack mechanisms or words of commitment on the issue but that greater resolve is required now more than ever to strengthen and implement national and international undertakings. It is against that background that the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Decade for People of African Descent, in the view of my delegation, are critical to maintaining the momentum and legacy of the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. It is not enough to simply condemn racism or manifestations of racism in any

form. We must act and be seen to be implementing our commitments.

Indonesia is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural nation. We take pride in our mosaic of people, which has evolved from our long history of tolerance and solidarity and been moulded by our centuries of struggle for independence against colonialism and imperialism. Over the years, we have turned the diversity of our people of our archipelago, the world's largest, into a source of unity and strength. Because of our own history, we are proud of the great importance and solidarity that we attach to the successful implementation of the commitments of the International Decade. Indonesia is also proud of its record in advocating against racism and racial discrimination, as our undertakings at home and participation in the relevant forums and processes show.

As the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other speakers before me have emphasized, my delegation also reaffirms the connection between the legacies of slavery and the ongoing racism, racial discrimination, poverty, inequality and other underlying causes that have prevented people of African descent from fulfilling their right to development. As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent, my delegation reiterates its call for taking more measures aimed at promoting knowledge of the cultures of African peoples as well as their contributions to the development of many other cultures, despite the various challenges they face, of which discrimination is only one.

My delegation once again reiterates Indonesia's strong commitment to the eradication of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including on online platforms, wherever they may be hiding.

**Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine):** I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting, which helps to attract more attention to combating racial discrimination. Given the high importance of the issue, I would like to make the following statement in my national capacity. Unfortunately, the joint statement of the Group of Eastern European States was not agreed on, owing to what seems to be one divergent view on the direct relevance of human rights to the elimination of racial discrimination.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

I welcome the decision to dedicate this meeting to the International Decade for People of African Descent. As a founding member of the United Nations, Ukraine actively participated in the decolonization process, and I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our solidarity with people of African descent. In Ukraine today, there are famous Ukrainians who are of African descent — a member of Parliament, journalists, singers, people of culture and academics.

I believe that it is of paramount importance to support the pursuit of the fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent. Ukraine therefore became a sponsor of resolution 75/170, establishing the International Day for People of African Descent. I want to express our appreciation to our friend Ambassador Rodrigo Carazo for his leadership on that important resolution and for Costa Rica's active role in promoting human rights and the rule of law.

I would like to reaffirm my State's willingness to continue to fully cooperate on the protection and promotion of human rights, including for people of African descent, and the eradication of all forms of intolerance. We also recognize that the issue of racial discrimination remains high on the African Union's agenda, as provided for in article 2 of the landmark African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which will mark the fortieth anniversary of its adoption in June. I would also like to remind the Assembly that Nelson Mandela once said, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion."

*(spoke in English)*

The United Nations is built on the principle that discriminating among human beings on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin is an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations among nations. It can disturb peace and security among peoples and the harmony of persons living side by side.

We have made important progress in the global fight against racism and racial discrimination in recent decades. Unfortunately, however, instances of the manifestation of racial discrimination still occur in the world. Crimes against humanity and the persecution of peoples persist. Intolerance and discrimination lead to violence and conflicts. Moreover, the coronavirus

disease pandemic has further exacerbated our existing challenges. We should therefore redouble our joint efforts to combat intolerance, as well as to provide protection to those who continue to be subjected to any kind of discrimination anywhere in the world. In that regard, it is crucial to ensure the effective and full implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. My State is committed to its obligations under the Convention and expects the same from all who are party to it. For instance, we have been looking forward to the implementation of the provisional measures in the International Court of Justice case against the Russian Federation on the application of the Convention.

Having learned the lessons of our great famine, the Holodomor, and of deportation, the Second World War, the Holocaust and the Soviet terror, Ukraine has made the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding within its society a foundation of its State policy. I am sure that the world will see progress in the global fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination on any grounds only if all the relevant stakeholders strengthen their efforts and take the appropriate measures in that regard.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Racism is a threat to international peace, stability and development, and as such, it is a public enemy of all humankind. China firmly upholds the active role of the United Nations in combating racism, and we support the initiative to hold a commemorative high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September. On 9 March, the representative of China delivered a joint statement on behalf of more than 100 countries at the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council calling for greater efforts to fight racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to combat stigmatization, hate speech and violence so as to build equal and inclusive societies.

The purpose of today's meeting is to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. However, by using the platform of the General Assembly to serve its political agenda, the United States representative has regrettably been spreading disinformation and levelling baseless accusations against China. We unequivocally oppose that behaviour and categorically reject such allegations. Unusually for a United States representative, Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield, speaking as a person of African descent on the occasion of today's meeting,

admitted her country's ignoble human rights record. However, that does not give her country licence to act arrogantly or tell other countries what to do.

If the United States really cares about human rights, it should address the deep-rooted problems of racial discrimination, social injustice and police brutality on its own soil. It should take effective measures to prevent and control the pandemic, save lives and ensure the equitable global distribution of vaccines. It should stop interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and lift unilateral coercive measures against developing countries. It should stop indiscriminately taking innocent lives in its overseas military operations and hold the perpetrators accountable. It should do some soul-searching and reflect on its own history of colonialization and aggression and on the profound suffering inflicted on the populations of the countries that it has invaded and colonized.

With regard to the allegation that there is a "genocide" in Xinjiang, as referred to in the United States representative's statement, nothing could be further from the truth or more absurd. It is an act of complete rumour-mongering and an outright lie, based on groundless motives. The United States is obsessed with fabricating lies regarding the Xinjiang issue, but lies are just lies and the truth will ultimately prevail. On 12 March, 64 countries made a joint statement to the Human Rights Council urging the countries concerned to stop using the Xinjiang issue to interfere in China's internal affairs, cease making unfounded accusations against China in the interests of their political agenda and refrain from using human rights as a cover to hinder developing countries in their development, which is their true intention.

My advice to the United States is that it should abandon its ideological prejudice and stop using human rights for political purposes, provoking confrontation and disrupting international cooperation on human rights. I suggest that it take concrete measures to put an end to the persistent stream at home of incidents of discrimination and hatred against people of African and Asian descent, and even their savage murder, and that in the spirit of cooperation on an equal footing, begin to better serve the cause of international human rights by focusing on practical and constructive action.

**Mr. Rizzi Razente** (Brazil): Brazil has the largest population of African descent in the world. Our people and culture show the outstanding contribution of the

African diaspora to building our diverse society. As a consequence, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is of the utmost importance to all Brazilians and provides an opportunity not only to show respect for the African diaspora's contribution to our nation but also to recall the challenges that the people of African descent face. I would therefore like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. The International Decade for People of African Descent presents an opportunity to remember that contribution without ignoring the tragedy of slavery. It also encompasses the ambition of fighting racism in all its forms with the aim of promoting social inclusion.

Brazil would like to reaffirm its commitment to the fight against racism and social disparities, especially during the coronavirus disease pandemic, whose toll on lives is the result both of the disease and of the measures to contain its transmission. In that regard, we have declared and extended until December an exceptional emergency for unemployed workers in both the formal and the informal sectors, enabling impoverished Brazilians to obtain basic needs such as food and medicine.

I would also like to reiterate our support for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as our unwavering commitment to the fight against racism, discrimination and intolerance. However, those millions of Brazilian citizens are not adequately represented in the most prestigious sectors of Brazilian society. We know that stereotyping plays a notorious role in that dynamic. We know that negative racial stereotypes and the stereotyping of people of African descent perpetuate racial disparities and racial injustice. In order to address those disparities, Brazil has adopted a comprehensive system of affirmative action and quotas in public universities and public service. Such measures have allowed Brazilians of African descent more opportunities and have created many new and successful role models, thereby directly tackling the challenges posed by the negative stereotyping of the Afro-descendant population.

Since 1988, the Brazilian Constitution has considered racism a crime not subject to bail or statutory limitations. Over the past two decades, Brazil has strengthened its policies against racism and racial discrimination. The teaching of African history and Afro-Brazilian culture is provided for in federal law, and on 20 November, the anniversary of the death of Zumbi dos Palmares, an important enslaved character

in Brazilian history, we celebrate a national Day of Black Awareness. I would like to point out that Brazil has important national initiatives regarding the fight against racism and intolerance, in the areas of both prevention and accountability for perpetrators. Brazil has critically integrated the subject of human rights and non-discrimination in its schools and universities.

**The President:** I thank all speakers for their statements and Mr. Iweala for his important contribution to today's discussion, which I hope that members will take time to reflect upon on Sunday, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The participation in this meeting today demonstrated that although our membership is diverse, there is more that unites us than divides us. It is our shared humanity that brought us together three quarters of a century ago, and that is how we will combat one of the great injustices of modern society — racial discrimination. I trust that members will bear this in mind during the upcoming meetings on the twentieth commemoration of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the political declaration, the mid-term review of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the permanent forum on people of African descent. We have a collective responsibility to uphold the rights of everyone, everywhere, and to eliminate racial discrimination.

The Assembly has thus concluded this commemorative meeting marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 70.

*Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

#### **Agenda item 119 (continued)**

#### **Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections**

##### **(a) Election of members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination**

##### **Note by the Secretary-General (A/75/248/Add.2)**

**The Acting President:** Pursuant to General Assembly decision 42/450, of 17 December 1987, and on the nomination of the Economic and Social Council, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.



The Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General, circulated in document A/75/248/Add.2, that contains a nomination by the Economic and Social Council to fill an outstanding vacancy in the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2022. As indicated in the document, by its decision 2021/201 C, of 24 February, the Economic and Social Council nominated the Philippines for election by the General Assembly to fill an outstanding vacancy in the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2022.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot. However, I should like to recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election. In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on a basis of dispensing with the secret ballot?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** Since there is one State nominated from among the Asia-Pacific States for the one seat to be filled by that group, may I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare the Philippines elected as a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2022?

*It was so decided (decision 75/410 B).*

**The Acting President:** I congratulate the Philippines on its election as a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. Members are reminded that one vacancy for a member from among the Western European and other States remains to be filled for a term beginning on the date of election by the General Assembly and expiring on 31 December 2021; and one for a member from among the Latin American and Caribbean States remains to be filled for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2023. The General Assembly will be in a position to act on those vacancies upon nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 119.

#### **Agenda item 120 (continued)**

#### **Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments**

#### **(h) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit**

#### **Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/75/758)**

**The Acting President:** As indicated in document A/75/758, the General Assembly is required, during the current session, to appoint two members to fill the vacancies on the Joint Inspection Unit that will arise from the expiration on 31 December 2021 of the term of office of Eileen Cronin, of the United States of America, and Jorge Flores Callejas, of Honduras.

In accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit and with Assembly resolution 61/238, of 22 December 2006, the President of the General Assembly, having held the necessary consultations with the regional groups concerned, requested Mexico and the United States to propose candidates to serve for a period of five years beginning on 1 January 2022.

As indicated in document A/75/758, the candidates, in accordance with resolution 59/267, of 23 December 2004, should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, in addition to knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

As further indicated in document A/75/758, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the President of the General Assembly has submitted to the Assembly the candidatures of Eileen Cronin, of the United States of America, and Carolina María Fernández Opazo, of Mexico, for appointment as members of the Joint Inspection Unit

for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2022 and expiring on 31 December 2026.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint Eileen Cronin, of the United States of America, and Carolina María Fernández Opazo, of Mexico, as members of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2022 and expiring on 31 December 2026?

*It was so decided (decision 75/415).*

**The Acting President:** May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 120?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.*