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Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)
later: Ms. Banaken Elel (Vice-Chair)..... (Cameroon)

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

Agenda item 69: Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
(continued)

(a) **Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance** (continued)
(A/78/18, A/78/277, A/78/302 and A/78/385)

(b) **Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action** (continued) (A/78/197, A/78/273, A/78/317 and A/78/538)

Agenda item 70: Right of peoples to self-determination
(continued) (A/78/261 and A/78/535)

1. **Ms. Reynolds** (Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent), introducing the reports of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (see A/78/277), said that the Working Group had issued four reports, namely, a report entitled “Facilitating the journey from rhetoric to reality” (A/HRC/54/71), in which the Working Group reviewed its 20 years of work, an annual thematic report (A/HRC/54/67 and A/HRC/54/67/Corr.1) and reports on official country visits to Australia (A/HRC/54/67/Add.2) and the United Kingdom (A/HRC/54/67/Add.1).

2. In the annual thematic report, the Working Group focused on the economic empowerment of people of African descent and set out the conclusions and recommendations made during its thirty-second session, the end of which had been marked by a special event to address the political narratives and highlight the importance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The Working Group had analysed how post-colonial structures, systems, policies and practices continued to reflect the intents and purposes advanced during the enslavement and colonialization periods, thereby subjecting people of African descent to a third wave of economic and other forms of deprivation and hardship. It had recognized that systems and policies that had effectively promoted precarity and Black indebtedness by draining assets from individuals and communities of African descent were a burden to countries, communities and individuals. All Member States should address those issues and establish mechanisms for eliminating structural, systemic and systematic bias and discrimination against people of African descent. The Working Group had also participated in two significant side events, one examining the role played by religious organizations in centuries of economic deprivation and another examining from a human rights perspective the impact

of artificial intelligence and the ubiquitous use of algorithms in everyday life.

3. Following its fact-finding country visits to Australia and the United Kingdom, the Working Group had welcomed the good practices and positive steps taken by both States to eliminate racial discrimination and guarantee the rights of people of African descent. However, it had also taken note of the pervasive, persistent and serious experiences of racial discrimination, racial profiling, harassment and exclusion of people of African descent in the policing of Black communities, schools, workplaces and public spaces. The disproportionate numbers of people of African descent in custody and the racial bias against them in the criminal justice system were a cause for concern. Similarly, the treatment of the descendants of the Windrush generation in the United Kingdom and the indefinite detention of migrants of African descent in Australia were particularly disturbing. The Working Group had conducted technical visits to Uruguay and Mexico to support the respective resident coordinators and country teams in addressing racism in United Nations programming. Those visits had shown that centuries of discrimination against Black people had left many people of African descent reluctant to claim their ancestry for fear of discrimination, leading to potential undercounting.

4. In 2023, 14 joint communications by special procedure mandate holders had been sent to Governments in several countries regarding reports of serious violations of the rights of people of African descent, ranging from police brutality and hate speech to discrimination and economic deprivation. The Working Group was concerned about the lack of attention paid to the matters raised in those communications and called for action to address them. In addition, worrying information had been received about the alarming situation of people of African descent who had fled the conflict in Ukraine and who continued to live in extremely difficult circumstances.

5. The Working Group welcomed calls for accelerated efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and urged the United Nations to ensure that issues affecting people of African descent were fully considered during preparations for the upcoming Summit of the Future. In that regard, Member States, regional and international organizations, United Nations entities and civil society organizations should meet their commitments to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Decade for People of African Descent. Given the limited awareness, promotion and achievements of the International

Decade, the General Assembly should conduct a robust review of its implementation in 2024 and promulgate a new decade for unfinished business, in order to fully carry out the programme of activities, encourage financial and technical investments in people of African descent and create an enabling environment for activists and advocates.

6. All stakeholders should enhance awareness about the causes and consequences of Black indebtedness and its cost to both people of African descent and the rest of humanity. To that end, the Working Group would focus on reparatory justice during its thirty-fifth session, to be held in Jamaica in 2024, and called on Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society to fully contribute to that critical event. Member States should also accelerate deliberations on the elaboration of the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

7. **Mr. Nyman** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union was committed to reducing inequalities and promoting equal opportunities for all. Those principles were enshrined in European Union treaties and reflected in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Union sought to tackle unemployment, poverty and discrimination with fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. Two key instruments to that end were the Employment Equality Directive and the Race Equality Directive, which required the equal treatment of all people, in all sectors, with respect to access to employment; working conditions; access to vocational training; involvement in workers', employers' and professional organizations; and access to social protection, health care, education, social advantages, goods and services, regardless of racial and ethnic origin.

8. Further details would be welcome on the impact of the global digital divide on the economic opportunities available to people of African descent. Addressing the digital divide and promoting digital transformation were priorities for the European Union. Its Global Gateway strategy was aimed at promoting smart, clean and secure links in the digital, energy and transport sectors, and strengthening health, education and research systems worldwide.

9. **Ms. Pereira Gomes** (Brazil) said that her Government remained committed to implementing the International Decade for People of African Descent and called on all Member States to declare a second decade. Brazil was also committed to combating and preventing racism and racial discrimination through the effective

implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and its mechanisms. Racial inequality and racial discrimination fuelled poverty, economic inequality and violations of the human rights of people of African descent worldwide. It was therefore important for States to take concrete measures towards establishing more equitable and just systems that fostered educational achievements, employment opportunities and entrepreneurship for people of African descent. The international community should scale up efforts to elaborate the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

10. **Ms. Orduz Duran** (Colombia) said that it was essential to address the issue of reparations in order to promote and protect the rights of the Afro-Colombian, Black, Palenquera and Raizal populations. Colombia was in the process of identifying the historical damage caused to those communities in terms of their living conditions and human rights, with a view to developing strategies for implementing adequate mitigation and reparation measures. Her delegation wondered what strategies could be adopted to improve data collection for addressing the current situation and determining whether specific policies had led to progress. More information would be useful on the best practices identified by the Working Group for improving access to land for people of African descent as a mechanism for facilitating economic empowerment.

11. **Ms. Zhang Sisi** (China) said that there was a serious problem of racism, xenophobia and religious discrimination in some Western countries, where African people and people of African descent lived in poverty and faced inequalities in access to health care, education and employment and in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. China had always advocated more dialogue and exchanges among different races and civilizations, and called for the right to development of all peoples to be respected. Racism was propagated by poverty, marginalization, social exclusion and economic gaps, and its elimination would require the breaking of the vicious cycle of inequality. China agreed with the recommendations of the Working Group and called on it to collaborate with other human rights mechanisms to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and address the symptoms and root causes of systematic racism and racial discrimination. Some Western countries needed to show greater political will to effectively implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, eradicate racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, and address the poverty,

unemployment, education and health challenges faced by African people and people of African descent.

12. **Mr. Murphy** (United States of America) said that his Government recognized the need to combat systemic racism, both domestically and worldwide. The meaningful participation of people of African descent was critical for the effective and representative design, implementation and evaluation of policies for combating systemic racism. Systemic racism and discrimination persisted in all societies owing to the lingering legacies of the transatlantic slave trade. The United States shared the concerns of the Working Group regarding the negative impacts of systemic racism on people of African descent and the slow progress in addressing those issues. Racial equity and justice continued to be top priorities for his Government, which had launched the first-ever President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States to advance equity for the African diaspora, both nationally and internationally. He wished to know what additional collaborative efforts could be made by Member States to foster the inclusive and secure participation of people of African descent in public affairs.

13. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that one of the major achievements of the Working Group had been the recent shift in international human rights discourse towards acknowledging the fact that expressions of racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent were systemic and structural in nature, rather than isolated, one-off incidents. One of the main barriers to the realization of the rights of people of African descent was racial profiling and prejudice, which prevailed in the areas of education, health care, housing, social services, employment and criminal justice, particularly in Western countries and the European Union. Those discriminatory practices were institutional in nature and fuelled by Western societies' deep-rooted prejudices and negative stereotypes against people of African descent, which hailed back to the colonial era, when Africans had been subjugated and their wealth and resources plundered.

14. The Russian Federation agreed with the conclusions of the Working Group concerning the existence of a powerful global culture of denial that overlooked or minimized systemic racism in societies and ignored inequality and injustice. There was a growing need for the Working Group to continue its efforts towards eliminating injustice against people of African descent, addressing the challenges facing them and effectively implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which required the full

support of Member States and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

15. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that her delegation agreed with the Working Group that the current economic situation of Africans and people of African descent was linked to the historical enslavement and colonialization of African populations. Slavery and colonialization had contributed significantly to the prosperity of certain countries, but the people of African descent currently living in such countries did not enjoy equal access to the associated benefits. The issues of education, the duty to remember and reparations must be addressed to promote the economic empowerment of people of African descent, and her delegation commended the inclusion of such issues in the reports of the Working Group.

16. More information would be appreciated on how perspectives on the right to development could be taken into account in the preparation of the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. Her delegation wished to know what action had been taken in the light of the urgent communications sent to some countries concerning the racial discrimination faced by people of African descent. Given the calls for a second international decade for people of African descent, it would be beneficial to know what lessons had been learned from the ongoing International Decade and how those lessons could be used for the second decade, if it came to be proclaimed.

17. **Ms. Reynolds** (Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent), said that artificial intelligence and digitalization had both a cumulative and a multiplier effect, which meant that their use by successive generations could compound and accelerate current disparities. It was therefore imperative to focus more closely on science and technology in schools, build teachers' capacities, involve people of African descent in research and strengthen ethical guidelines and oversight measures governing the use of artificial intelligence.

18. There was a need to collect, analyse and disseminate disaggregated data that recognized the existence of race, racism and discrimination. To begin to address those issues, States would need to identify where such discrimination was concentrated and how it was affecting people of African descent. Many positive measures had already been adopted to that effect, such as the reservation by the Government of Uruguay of a proportionate number of posts for people of African descent within the public service.

19. The Working Group believed that the current International Decade for People of African Descent had been a lost opportunity due to a lack of awareness in many countries. Accordingly, Member States should promulgate a second decade, promote it at the national level and invest in civil society and government initiatives that would not only give rise to structures and policies, but also build capacities to examine how existing structures and policies were disadvantageous to people of African descent and how they could be improved. Enabling environments should be created to ensure that activists and advocates for people of African descent were not subjected to reprisals. There was a global denial of the situation of people of African descent, and efforts to address racism and racial discrimination should begin within the United Nations. Since people of African descent had diverse views, religions and cultures, advocacy for their human rights was therefore beneficial to all of humanity.

20. **Ms. Campbell Barr** (Chair of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent), introducing the first annual report of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent ([A/HRC/54/68](#); see [A/78/273](#)), said that systemic racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia had undermined the universality of human rights and the historical achievements of ending slavery, colonial rule and discriminatory laws and practices. Together with the rollback of equality safeguards in education, the continued use of excessive force by law enforcement against people of African descent and persistent violence against migrants and asylum-seekers of African descent all pointed to the structural and systemic nature of racial discrimination. They also underscored the magnitude of the human rights violations faced by people of African descent and the continued denial of the racist nature of such acts, which made it almost impossible to hold many perpetrators accountable.

21. The report provided an overview of the Permanent Forum's first two sessions and a summary of its thematic discussions and recommendations, and reflected the long-awaited aspirations of people of African descent for equality, justice and dignity. The Permanent Forum had met for the first time in Geneva, in December 2022, to discuss crucial issues such as systemic racism, climate justice, restorative justice and equality for all people of African descent. The second session had been held in New York in 2023 on the theme of "Realizing the dream: a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent". In addition, it had organized five discussions on the following themes: global restorative justice; pan-Africanism; transnational

migration; the use of data and an evidence-based approach to recognize and address systemic and structural racism; and health, well-being and intergenerational trauma. With over 1,600 participants and more than 100 side events organized during the course of its two sessions, the Permanent Forum had become the largest platform for people of African descent within the United Nations.

22. During its two sessions, the Permanent Forum had reaffirmed the importance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and underscored the need to formulate a draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. The Permanent Forum had shared its preliminary observations on the draft declaration with the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which had been mandated to prepare the draft declaration. It was crucial to engage with civil society in the elaboration of the draft declaration, and the Permanent Forum was fully committed to broad and comprehensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders from different regions of the world. Member States should attach greater importance to the drafting process and support the organization of regional consultations to ensure that the aspirations, experiences and voices of people of African descent were reflected in the draft declaration.

23. The International Decade for People of African Descent had played a critical role in raising awareness of the historical and contemporary challenges faced by millions of people of African descent and had served as a platform for acknowledging historical injustices and their consequences. However, it was concerning that people of African descent continued to face systemic racism and racial discrimination, and that addressing deep-rooted discriminatory practices remained a major challenge. Moreover, the Permanent Forum had noted the invisibility of people of African descent, especially women, who suffered from multiple forms of discrimination as a result of systemic and structural racism and gender bias. As called for during the commemoration of the International Day for People of African Descent on 31 August 2023, the General Assembly should proclaim a second international decade in order to advance the pursuit of equity, restorative justice and the full recognition of people of African descent, and to effectively address systemic and structural racial discrimination.

24. Member States should take measures to ensure restorative justice, since reparations were a cornerstone of justice, without which there could be no effective national or international sustainable development

agenda. In that connection, the Permanent Forum called for the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry on restorative justice for Haiti under the Human Rights Council, and for the promulgation of an international law on restorative justice. Member States should also collect disaggregated data on the human rights of people of African descent, racial justice indicators and political goals, with a view to assessing the effectiveness and impacts of relevant policies and laws.

25. **Ms. Tudor-bezies** (Canada) said that the legacy of colonialism, slavery and segregation had exacerbated the marginalization of many people of African descent in key social sectors, such as education, employment, housing and health care. The elimination of those social inequalities would enable the political, social and economic advancement of people of African descent for healthier and more prosperous societies. In an effort to eradicate racism against Black people, Canada was in the process of renewing its national anti-racism strategy and was implementing its first-ever national action plan on combating hate. Both initiatives were based on concrete actions that had already helped to improve the lives of Canadians of African descent, including by supporting and building the capacities of their communities and organizations. Her Government was committed to working with the Permanent Forum to develop the principles of justice, recognition and development, improve the living conditions of people of African descent and protect their rights. Her delegation wondered how the international community could use restorative approaches to counter the persecution of LGBTIQ+ people of African descent.

26. **Mr. Nyman** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that more political will was needed to accelerate the elimination of racism in all its forms and manifestations, with the active involvement of people of African descent. The European Union had made a serious effort to engage in the first round of discussions on the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent and was currently reviewing the revised Chair's draft. To foster a consensus, the negotiations should be as inclusive as possible. The position of the European Union would be guided by the precept of ensuring respect for the fundamental principle of the universality of human rights and the importance of upholding existing international human rights law. The Permanent Forum should make every effort to organize its sessions consecutively with those of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective

Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to maximize synergies.

27. **Ms. Riveroll Usabiaga** (Mexico) said that her delegation welcomed the fact that the Chair of the Permanent Forum was a woman. Approximately 2 per cent of the Mexican population identified as people of African descent. The 2019 reform of the Constitution had enabled the just and necessary recognition of the economic, social, cultural and historical contributions of Mexicans of African descent, and the promotion of their human rights and sustainable development. In addition, through the national census, relevant data were collected and disaggregated for the identification of Afro-Mexican communities. Mexico was working closely with Canada and the United States through the North American Partnership for Equity and Racial Justice, which was aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in combating racial discrimination as an essential element for building more just and inclusive societies. Mexico had a long way to go in terms of ensuring equality, racial justice and inclusive and sustainable development. More information would therefore be appreciated on best practices and measures for addressing systemic racial discrimination and exclusion in the context of multiple and overlapping forms of intolerance, such as xenophobia and gender discrimination.

28. **Ms. Pereira Gomes** (Brazil) said that Brazil had sent a high-level delegation to the second session of the Permanent Forum and remained committed to promoting racial equality nationally and internationally, including by hosting a future session of the Permanent Forum. Her Government had created the Ministry of Racial Equality with a view to strengthening reparatory justice policies and addressing systemic and structural racism in Brazil. Member States should attach greater importance to the elaboration of the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. Furthermore, the renewal of the International Decade for People of African Descent would give the international community an additional opportunity to make tangible progress towards racial equality. Brazil called for the provision of sufficient resources for Portuguese interpretation at the sessions of the Permanent Forum as a way to further increase the participation of Brazilian civil society.

29. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his country had supported the creation of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent amid serious confrontations with Western countries, which had sought to impede its establishment in every way possible. The Permanent Forum had become an important platform for discussing the hopes and

aspirations of people of African descent and solutions to the challenges facing them. His delegation shared the Permanent Forum's view on the need to rectify the long-term consequences of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, genocide and apartheid. The creation of the International Fund for the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation had been a timely initiative. Cultural artefacts and treasures that had been taken from Africa could be used to fill the museums of developing States, rather than those of Western countries.

30. The Russian Federation had maintained close ties of solidarity with the peoples of Africa, having supported the movement for the independence of African States during the previous century and the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It would continue to help countries to counteract neocolonial policies. The crimes against humanity committed by European and American colonizers and landowners during the transatlantic slave trade should be investigated and condemned, as there was no statute of limitations. His delegation also supported the creation of international mechanisms for paying reparations, condemning those events and restoring justice.

31. **Ms. Orduz Duran** (Colombia) said that her Government supported the efforts made by the Permanent Forum to defend and ensure the effective enjoyment of the human rights of all people of African descent. Accordingly, Colombia endorsed the initiative to elaborate a draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, which would make it possible to comprehensively address individual and collective rights. The draft declaration should include key issues such as universal recognition of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of people of African descent; access to justice; tools for combating neocolonial practices; and the building of collective memory. Her Government, and in particular the newly established Ministry of Equality and Equity, would make every effort to advance those common objectives.

32. **Ms. Zhang Sisi** (China) said that her Government attached great importance to protecting the human rights of Africans and people of African descent and had actively supported the work of the Permanent Forum and the elaboration of a draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. African people and people of African descent continued to suffer the impacts of colonialism, slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In some Western countries, systemic racism, racial

discrimination and hate crimes against people of African descent and other ethnic minorities had led to tragedies. Discriminatory law enforcement practices constituted serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The international community should urge the countries concerned to scrutinize their own problems of discrimination and take practical measures to restore truth and justice to victims. China stood ready to work with all parties to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and ensure that all people could live in dignity in an inclusive, equal and free society.

33. **Ms. Campbell Barr** (Chair of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent) said that there was a need to strengthen and promote more inclusive laws that clearly outlined the impacts of improving the quality of life of people of African descent, and to establish observatories for ensuring that laws were fairly applied to people of African descent. National mechanisms should be set up to combat racism and racial discrimination, and the Governments of Canada and Mexico had made commendable efforts to that end. It would be interesting to conduct intergovernmental exchanges aimed at sharing and promoting best practices. At the same time, it was imperative to strengthen all anti-racism laws, establish a clear-cut and applicable legal framework and institutionalize financial resources and programmes that guaranteed the human rights of people of African descent. The Permanent Forum was committed to the inclusion of Portuguese interpretation during its sessions, given that Brazil had the largest population of African descent in the world outside Africa.

34. The Permanent Forum had discussed the creation of a development fund for people of African descent and welcomed the efforts of the European Union, which had scheduled an upcoming dialogue on people of African descent and the fight against racism in its States members. The Permanent Forum also recognized the support and contributions of the Governments of Colombia and Brazil. Greater collective efforts were needed from the international community to accelerate the eradication of systemic racism by guaranteeing justice, recognition and development, and a second international decade for people of African descent would go a long way towards making that possible.

35. **Ms. MacLeod** (Member of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination), introducing the report of the Working Group (A/78/535), said that the Working Group had continued to engage with stakeholders to enhance the implementation of its mandate and had

conducted visits to Greece and Armenia during the reporting period. It had led and joined communications to States and relevant actors on behalf of potential victims of human rights violations related to the activities of mercenaries and private military and security companies.

36. In its report, the Working Group highlighted the international and regional regulatory environment for mercenaries, related actors and private military and security companies with a view to strengthening the applicability, implementation and enforceability of international law. Emerging trends in their use were identified, together with violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The report detailed the increasing use of mercenaries and related actors across countries and conflicts, which prolonged conflicts, undermined peace, destabilized regions and exacerbated the commission of human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

37. The Working Group continued to examine the role of mercenarism in new forms of warfare, in particular the involvement of third-party States in armed conflicts through proxy actors and cyberwarfare. The Working Group discussed the application and limitations of international and national legal frameworks given the evolving nature of mercenarism, with the lack of engagement with and implementation of existing frameworks by Member States posing significant challenges.

38. Attempts to prevent the recruitment, training, financing and use of mercenaries must be complemented by development efforts to address the root causes of mercenarism, which often intersected with the structural causes of exclusion, poverty, inequality and discrimination. Member States were therefore urged to focus on such structural causes.

39. The Working Group welcomed regulatory initiatives such as the Montreux Document but noted that insufficient numbers of States had committed to them. It also welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the open-ended intergovernmental working group to elaborate the content of an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of private military and security companies, although its form, scope and content had yet to be agreed. States should engage in the development of a globally applicable instrument on private military and security companies.

40. Efforts towards a binding treaty on business and human rights must take into consideration the differences between the private military and security company industry and other business sectors, in

particular the use of force, which could be addressed only through regulation. To prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of mercenarism, States should refrain from and prohibit the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries and ensure effective remedies for victims. States should also ensure legal liability for human rights violations by businesses providing security or military services.

41. **Mr. Nyman** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the activities of mercenaries, a category defined in international law, should not be conflated with those of private military and security companies. The European Union called for the Working Group's mandate to be focused more clearly on mercenaries. It agreed that mercenaries and related actors prolonged armed conflict, undermined peace, destabilized regions and caused human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

42. The European Union continued to advocate justice and to support efforts to hold accountable those involved in human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including perpetrators from unregulated private military and security entities, which was relevant in the case of the unprovoked and unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

43. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that his delegation was concerned by the fact that countries such as the United States supported the use of mercenaries to intervene in the internal affairs of developing countries, destabilize legitimate Governments and curtail the right to self-determination and that the United States used mercenaries to protect its resource extraction activities in countries of the South, which often led to human rights violations. Cuba invited the Working Group to continue to evaluate those issues.

44. States should refrain from and prohibit all engagement with mercenaries. Cuba punished mercenarism by law and worked to prevent the involvement of Cuban citizens in mercenarism and trafficking in persons. It would continue to support the Working Group by presenting an annual draft resolution on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination.

45. **Mr. Ayad** (Iraq) said that the activities of mercenaries, mercenary actors and private military and security companies must be aligned with international law. Iraq had a law regulating private military and security companies, ensuring that they were held accountable if they violated human rights and that all their personnel had knowledge of human rights

principles. Iraq was a contributor to and complied with the Montreux Document. He enquired about the impact of the intersection between the use of mercenaries and the work of private military and security companies in the context of international human rights law and humanitarian law and about the extent to which a legally binding instrument was needed to regulate private military security companies.

46. **Mr. Hakobyan** (Armenia) said that his delegation wished to express its gratitude to the Working Group for its visit to Armenia in February 2023, which had been timely given the country's recent accession to the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. Armenia had subsequently adopted a new Criminal Code including provisions on mercenaries. The Working Group had highlighted the efforts of Armenia towards effectively integrating the Convention into its domestic legal framework and providing adequate safeguards for investigating and prosecuting related crimes.

47. Armenia was encouraged by the finding of the Working Group that the country could be a pioneer in the Caucasus in advocating accountability, access to justice and remedies for victims of abuses by mercenaries, related actors and private security companies. In addition, the report of the Working Group had put to rest groundless allegations against Armenia.

48. **Ms. MacLeod** (Member of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination) said that there was a crucial need for a legally binding instrument to regulate private military and security companies, as there were normative gaps in the Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers' Association, in particular regarding the protection of and accountability for victims.

49. The numbers of mercenaries and private military and security companies were increasing exponentially, but the international legal definition of a mercenary was very narrow. States recruited individuals into their armed forces, labelling them trainers or instructors specifically to circumvent that definition. She argued against binary categorizations of those actors, who were capable of committing human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity regardless of whether they had been contractually engaged in a role that met the definition.

50. Without the proper regulation of mercenaries and the criminalization of their recruitment, training, financing and use, there could be no criminal prosecutions or accountability and remedy for victims.

The Working Group urged States to accede to the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries or, minimally, to criminalize the recruitment, training and financing of mercenarism domestically and ensure the accountability of private military and security companies for human rights and international humanitarian law violations.

51. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the items.

52. **Mr. Hakobyan** (Armenia) said that equality and the prohibition of discrimination based on protected characteristics were embedded in the national legislation of Armenia.

53. Political leaders, academia, civil society and the media bore special responsibility for curtailing hate speech, which was often amplified by information technologies, facilitating the brainwashing of large segments of society. Unfortunately, the same actors frequently incited hatred and denied and justified past crimes. High-level hate speech could be interpreted as an official instruction to commit violence and hate crimes, and institutionalized hate speech targeting ethnic and religious groups often caused conflicts.

54. Armenians had long been the target of State-led hate propaganda and xenophobia in Azerbaijan, as documented by international and regional organizations. In 2021, Armenia had instigated proceedings for violations of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by Azerbaijan before the International Court of Justice, which had instituted provisional measures against Azerbaijan to prevent racial hatred and discrimination against Armenians.

55. To eradicate racism and discrimination, it was important to comply with the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

56. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that the doctrine of racial superiority had been a driving force behind the transatlantic slave trade that had stripped Africa of its children and subjected them to subhuman treatment for centuries. The fear of the other still fuelled racism and racial discrimination, with Africans and their descendants the primary targets.

57. In the Durban Programme of Action, slavery was recognized as a crime against humanity, with racism a consequence that perpetuated social and economic inequalities, in particular in Africa. The issue of slave trade reparations was often disregarded, possibly as a result of shame, which was understandable given the heavy burden of having contributed to the worst trade in

human history, or of denial, which must be tackled directly with bold, lasting measures.

58. To take efforts to combat racism to another level, possible avenues for exploration included reviewing the teaching of history to restore the truth and correct the perception of the other; considering economic, social, legal and judicial redress for the ongoing discrimination against Africans and people of African descent; and contemplating international measures to rectify inequalities stemming from colonialism.

59. The return of cultural property and constructive involvement in negotiations on a convention on the right to development would be symbolic steps in combating the root cause of racism. Consulting the victims of racism and fulfilling the duty to remember were crucial for preventing the reoccurrence of such a human tragedy and eradicating racism and racial discrimination forever.

60. **Mr. Lang** (United States of America) said that his country recognized the need for coordinated, sustained solutions for combating systemic racism, discrimination and xenophobia globally, acknowledging its own challenges with systemic racism.

61. Marginalized racial, ethnic and Indigenous communities faced systemic exclusion that prevented their full participation in economic, social and civic life, in addition to compounded intersectional discrimination, leaving them disproportionately affected by issues such as epidemics, climate change, environmental injustice, access to clean water, food insecurity, inadequate health, hate-based violence and economic inequality.

62. The United States applauded human rights defenders working against injustice to promote the rights and dignity of members of their communities and had created the Global Anti-Racism Champions Award to honour advocates combating racism, discrimination and xenophobia. The most recent tools employed by his Government to combat hatred were the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States, the national strategy to counter antisemitism and an executive order benefiting Asian Americans, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.

63. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the fact that the right to self-determination was still being discussed at the United Nations was proof that some people did not accept the sanctity of that right and that others remained deprived of it. It was as though the right to self-determination was a luxury that did not apply to all people. The rights to life and security and other rights were also withheld from certain peoples, such as the Palestinians. He asked whether the Palestinians were

being deprived of their basic rights to prevent them from achieving self-determination or whether the reverse was true.

64. The Palestinian people had decided to establish their country on the entire territory with Jerusalem as its capital. The world was witnessing the Palestinians on one side and the right to self-determination on the other, separated by an apartheid wall formed by the most barbaric occupying regime in modern times, preventing the Palestinians from achieving self-determination and establishing their State. Israel had been occupying the Syrian Golan since 1967. Was it not the case that the Syrian people, like any other people in the world, had the rights to liberation and to self-determination?

65. Like an arrow approaching its target, the Palestinians would continue to move closer to the full realization of their right to self-determination. The Syrian Arab Republic would stand by the Palestinian people until they achieved their right to freedom.

66. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) said that her country was committed to a society free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that did not view people of African descent and other ethnic groups as inferior, ignoring their cultural richness and relegating them to second-class citizenship.

67. Costa Rica had established itself as a multi-ethnic and multicultural democratic republic in its Constitution of 2015, as a response to the historical demands of people of African descent and other ethnic minorities. According to the most recent census, Costa Ricans of African descent were the second largest ethnic group in the country, which was an achievement in terms of cultural and statistical visibility. In 2020, Costa Rica had initiated the declaration of 31 August as the International Day for People of African Descent at the General Assembly, realized through Assembly resolution [75/170](#).

68. People of African descent faced disparities around the world and were 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty. Costa Rica called for the mainstreaming of the ethnic, racial and intercultural perspective in all policies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, for which the operational guidelines on the inclusion of people of African descent in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were important.

69. The creation of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent had helped to repair historical injustices and systemic racism. Costa Rica supported an international declaration on the rights of people of African descent, and a second International Decade for People of African Descent.

70. **Ms. Dhanutirto** (Indonesia) said that instances of Islamophobia, including the burning of the Qur'an, had been on the rise, and there was an endless cycle of violence rooted in racial and national differences. It was crucial to continue dialogue fostering tolerance and understanding.

71. As a country that was home to a vast range of ethnic groups, cultures, languages and religions, Indonesia recognized the importance of harmony for national unity. The protection of cultural identity was enshrined in the Constitution and strengthened by legislation on eliminating racial and ethnic discrimination. Through its Jakarta Plurilateral Dialogue 2023 initiative, Indonesia aimed to bolster global actions against religious intolerance, violence and discrimination.

72. It was crucial to balance freedom of expression with the protection of the rights and dignities of national, ethnic, racial and religious groups. Some media outlets had propagated content that could incite hostility and hatred. Moreover, social media platforms and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence could bridge divides but also amplify divisions. States needed to adopt measures that addressed media content in order to foster harmonious coexistence, understanding and mutual respect.

73. The urgent need for the universal realization of the right to self-determination was exemplified by the situation of the Palestinians, whose claim to self-determination had been unambiguously supported in Security Council resolutions over recent decades. Upholding some resolutions and ignoring others undermined international law.

74. Indonesia urged the resumption of the peace process, with the two-State solution as an imperative. The systematic efforts of the occupying Power threatened that goal. Indonesia called for decisive action before it was too late. The monstrous situation in Gaza had resulted in the deaths of more than 8,000 Palestinians, over half of whom were children, women and older persons. The right to self-determination could not be discussed without addressing that situation.

75. Indonesia was firmly opposed to foreign military intervention, aggression and occupation, which had led to the suppression of the right to self-determination in the past. The international community must speak for the voiceless and champion justice, peace and humanity. There must be no double standards in upholding international law and human rights.

76. *Ms. Banaken Elel (Cameroon), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

77. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that it was worrying that some developed countries continued to insist on ignoring or devaluing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It was also deeply worrying that such countries as the United States continued to justify the promotion of supremacist and racist ideas, including within the political system. It was inconceivable that a country as rich as the United States, which claimed to be a champion of human rights, had not yet been able to address the structural and systemic racism suffered by Afrodescendent, Latino and Indigenous minorities. Racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance were a part of daily life in that country. The cases of Tyre Nichols, Anthony Lowe, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor were representative of the police brutality that persons of African descent faced daily as a result of an exclusionary and racist system.

78. Supremacist theories underpinning racism and racial discrimination were scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance must be combated and eliminated in all their manifestations. That goal could not be achieved, however, as long as the root causes of such phenomena, such as poverty and underdevelopment, the aftermath of colonialism, marginalization and social exclusion and lack of education, remained unaddressed and as long as a culture of tolerance and respect was not promoted.

79. For Cuba, a proudly multiracial nation, the eradication of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia was an ethical imperative. Overall, 45.11 per cent of the members of the Cuban parliament were Black or multiracial. In 2019, following the adoption of its national programme against racism and racial discrimination, a national monitoring commission had been set up to eliminate the remaining vestiges of racism and racial prejudices.

80. All peoples had the right to self-determination. However, for many peoples under colonial domination or foreign occupation that right remained an impossible dream, as was the case for the Palestinian people. The decades of illegal Israeli occupation and colonialization, added to the current indiscriminate bombing of the Palestinian population by Israel with the complicity of the United States, the destruction of homes, hospitals and civilian infrastructure, and the withholding of basic services from the Gazan population, constituted crimes against humanity and war crimes.

81. Cuba reaffirmed its support for a broad, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the creation of two States to enable the exercise by

the Palestinian people of the right to self-determination and the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and the right to return guaranteed for refugees.

82. Those who had already paid a high price to achieve and preserve their independence saw how attempts were being made to violate that right through the imposition of unilateral coercive measures and subversive agendas. The Cuban people knew very well the value of self-determination. For daring to exercise that right, the United States had imposed on Cuba the longest economic, commercial and financial blockade in history, with the declared purpose of stifling and subjugating the Cuban people. The blockade, which his delegation would never cease to denounce, was an affront to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, constituted a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people and was the main obstacle to the country's development. However, after six decades of unsuccessfully applying the same policy, the United States should have already understood that the Cuban people would not relent in defending their right to self-determination.

83. **Ms. Pichardo Urbina** (Nicaragua) said that racism had been a destructive scourge throughout human history that fuelled cruel and supremacist ideologies and practices, ranging from the slave trade to genocide against Indigenous Peoples. Nicaragua condemned the racism and cultural supremacy taking root in Europe against the beliefs and religions of Indigenous Peoples.

84. The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity had advanced in combating racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through a national legal system that respected diversity and international human rights instruments, such as the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Her country stood in solidarity with victims of racism and discrimination and was firmly committed to creating a more just and equal world.

85. Self-determination and the eradication of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations were vital to development and peace. Nicaragua was proud to be a member of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and reaffirmed its commitment to working tirelessly to fulfil the mandate under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

86. **Mr. Biang** (Gabon) said that his country stood in solidarity with the millions of people working tirelessly to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and with those whose lives were under threat because of their skin colour, ethnicity or religious beliefs. Gabon was a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, supported the numerous General Assembly resolutions on the matter and had implemented the recommendations of the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference on criminalizing and enacting legislation against racial or religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

87. Specialist national institutions and national and regional bodies were key to effectively combating racism and discrimination. To strengthen its efforts in that connection, his Government had set up an observatory of inequality. It fell to Member States to combat the scourge of racism by executing action plans, collaborating with civil society organizations and demonstrating greater political will to fully implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

88. **Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that racism was an unjustifiable, centuries-old scourge that had harmful, multifaceted consequences for entire peoples and constituted a threat to the entire international community. Despite the entry into force of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, racism persisted, undermining people's rights and dignity. The growing gap between wealthy and developing countries contributed to marginalization and racial exclusion, and to the notion of racial and cultural hegemony championed by supremacist and far-right movements, which promoted hate speech, racist language and violence. As victims of slavery and colonialism, people of African descent were still a target of racism and racial discrimination. All States should condemn racism in all its forms and take all necessary measures to definitively eradicate it. Progress was being made by the international community in combating that scourge, notably through the reaffirmation of the right of peoples to self-determination in the Charter of the United Nations, the creation of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, but much work remained to be done.

89. Cognizant of the threat of racism, particularly in a multi-ethnic country such as Côte d'Ivoire, his Government was actively combating racism through its adherence to relevant international instruments. In line with its commitment to implementing the Durban

Programme of Action, his Government had banned racism in the Constitution and had enacted legislative reforms to criminalize racist acts. The national human rights council and other bodies contributed to raising awareness, helping victims and preventing the use of racist language in the press and social media. Tolerance was taught in schools with the aim of instilling in pupils the value of accepting difference and diversity.

90. Sustainable development could not be achieved without eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Côte d'Ivoire encouraged Member States that had not yet done so to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to implement the Durban Programme of Action and to follow the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

91. **Ms. Lortkipanidze** (Georgia) said that promoting equality and human rights without discrimination was one of the four core priorities of her country's human rights strategy for the period 2022–2030. The other priorities were continuously improving anti-discrimination legislation, considering the needs of minority groups and improving victim-oriented responses to crimes and violence based on discrimination.

92. Her Government's comprehensive joint data system of statistics on crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance enabled relevant authorities to share information with each other. Awareness-raising campaigns aimed at strengthening tolerance and combating discrimination were being conducted across the country. The Ministry of Justice regularly distributed information brochures on anti-discrimination laws throughout the country. The Training Centre of Justice organized activities, training sessions and information meetings on eliminating discrimination and ensuring equality.

93. Regrettably, owing to the occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali by the Russian Federation, the human rights situation remained alarming. The conflict-affected people in those Russia-occupied regions suffered from increasing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Discrimination on ethnic grounds and the prohibition of education in the Georgian language continued to have an extremely negative humanitarian impact on the people in those regions.

94. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was a human rights priority of his Government. Despite many major changes in the world since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and

Programme of Action, racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance, particularly against people of African descent, had not disappeared. The efforts of the international community to rectify the grave historical injustices and crimes against humanity of the colonial past had failed, with discrimination and intolerance against people of African descent becoming systemic in nature and permeating the entire system of government in some countries.

95. The Russian Federation had consistently supported international efforts to promote the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance at the United Nations and had always voted in favour of General Assembly resolutions on that topic. Every year his delegation put forward a draft resolution on combating glorification of Nazism and was pleased that the majority of countries still took an objective view of the outcome of the Second World War and understood the importance of preserving the fundamental principles of the United Nations with a view to preventing a reoccurrence of the horrors of war that arose from the criminal ideology and practices of Nazism. The current global situation clearly underscored the relevance of that initiative.

96. The Russian Federation was one of the largest multi-ethnic States in the world, with more than 190 peoples living on its territory. Those peoples had been given ample opportunity to exercise their right to territorial and cultural self-determination, including through the establishment of autonomous areas, of which there were 22 national republics, 1 autonomous province and 4 autonomous districts. The creation of national municipal regions in areas densely populated by Indigenous Peoples was another major step towards ensuring local self-government and preserving their traditional ways of life.

97. **Mr. Serage** (Mozambique) said that the principle of self-determination of peoples and the right to self-government were enshrined in his country's Constitution. As a country that had endured centuries of colonial domination, Mozambique believed that Western Sahara, as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, should be supported in reaching, through free, fair and transparent negotiations, a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provided for the self-determination of its people.

98. Mozambique also supported any initiative of the United Nations and other international organizations aimed at reaching a durable and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Palestine. His country condemned the ongoing violence against civilians in Israel and in the Palestinian territory and

urged the parties to build the trust necessary to reach a long-lasting political solution based on the two-State formula.

99. All States should continue to make every effort to ensure the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, which was central to the enjoyment of other human rights, peace and development.

100. **Ms. Al-Halique** (Jordan) said that her country remained firmly committed to guaranteeing the right to life without discrimination. The obligation for all States to protect human rights without prejudice extended to migrants, refugees and stateless persons. As highlighted by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, migrant women and girls seeking refuge were particularly vulnerable, and Jordan was committed to providing free health care to women victims of gender-based violence, including refugee women. By establishing family protection units in refugee camps and investigating violence against women, Jordan had taken concrete steps to ensure that refugees had access to justice. All children who were born to refugees and registered in Jordan had the same rights as Jordanian children, including access to education. Nearly half of Jordanian schools remained overcrowded owing to the burden shouldered by the national education system on behalf of the international community. In 2016, the Minister of Education in Jordan had opened several double-shift schools to enrol 24,000 refugee children.

101. Despite protracted conflicts in the region, Jordan remained committed to the promotion of human rights. In camps across Jordan, 90 per cent of the Palestinian refugees were registered to access all services available to Jordanian citizens. However, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which was supposed to provide those essential services, was chronically underfunded and therefore able to provide services to only about 3 per cent of them. The shortfall was covered by refugee-hosting countries. Over the past three weeks, 59 staff from the Agency had been killed in Gaza owing to the failure by Israel to discriminate between civilians and combatants. The indiscriminate shelling, the collective deprivation of food, water and fuel and the forced displacement of Gazans heightened the exposure of the most vulnerable people to racial discrimination and violence.

102. Jordan had prohibited hate speech, incitement to violence and propaganda based on racial discrimination and had criminalized all manifestations of hatred and sectarianism, including on social media. Digital platforms must not provide a haven for racist hate

speech. All people in Jordan had the right to address complaints of racial discrimination in court. Ethnic and religious minorities enjoyed their cultural rights and the rights to citizenship and freedom of association.

103. **Ms. Caldera Guitierrez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of discrimination had been exacerbated by the current political and humanitarian crises, and were expanding with the use of technology. Intercultural and intergenerational dialogue were tools for combating the stereotypes and prejudices that led to acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

104. After centuries of marginalization, Bolivia was now recognized as a diverse, plurinational State that was made more inclusive by the contributions of Bolivians of African descent. Her delegation therefore wished to draw attention to the systemic discrimination suffered by Indigenous Peoples and to the multiple and interrelated forms of discrimination still faced by Indigenous women and girls, which required a more concrete and coordinated response from the international community.

105. Her Government had passed a law on preventing and criminalizing acts of racism and all forms of discrimination and was implementing a multisectoral plan against racism and all forms of discrimination for the period 2021–2025. As a member and Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, the Plurinational State of Bolivia reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

106. In view of the grave circumstances facing the international community, her delegation wished to express its solidarity with the Palestinian people. The right to self-determination was an internationally recognized right provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, the international community should ensure respect for the dignity and sovereignty of Palestine and respond to the humanitarian crisis. Her country supported all peoples still pursuing self-determination and suffering the consequences of colonialism. It was more urgent than ever to resolve the question of Palestine and consolidate the two-State solution.

107. **Mr. Pieris** (Sri Lanka) said that eliminating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was a crucial goal for a just and inclusive society. In that regard, education and awareness-raising played a vital role, and legislation and policies were essential. Governments should enact laws prohibiting discrimination and providing mechanisms for victims to

seek justice. The media should promote positive representations of diverse communities and challenge harmful stereotypes.

108. On the twenty-second anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the achievements made thus far in eliminating racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be reviewed. The Durban Declaration should be seen as a beginning and not an end, as it was key to responding to those who continued to suffer discrimination.

109. As a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious country whose Constitution guaranteed non-discrimination, Sri Lanka had taken measures to ensure dignity and rights for all human beings. His country was deeply concerned about online manifestations of terrorism and violence and about resurgent racism, and remained committed to building a society in which the rights, safety and security of all communities were ensured.

110. **Mr. Hassani** (Algeria) said that the principle of non-discrimination and the commitment to stand with peoples fighting for independence and their right to self-determination and struggling against racial discrimination had been enshrined in the Algerian Constitution. His country was deeply concerned about growing populism involving the spread of hate speech and abject narratives that fuelled racism and violent extremism. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was a solid blueprint for effectively and collectively addressing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Political action, legal measures and educational and awareness-raising initiatives were needed to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Algeria had thus submitted resolution [72/130](#) to the General Assembly to declare 16 May the International Day of Living Together in Peace.

111. The right of peoples to self-determination was a cardinal principle of Algerian foreign policy, as evidenced by his Government's constant support for people living under foreign occupation. International efforts should continue towards the full and effective implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to self-determination by people living under foreign occupation. Algeria strongly condemned the attacks against the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people, which constituted a grave violation of humanitarian law by the occupying Power in Palestine. The international human rights instruments did not exclude the Palestinian people from their rights to peace, dignity and self-

determination. The people in Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa, were still awaiting the decolonization of the territory in line with the relevant resolutions allowing them to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

112. **Mr. Aydil** (Türkiye) said that his country's Constitution was based on non-discrimination and the equality of all individuals. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination had been incorporated into national legislation. Given the importance of combined national, regional and international efforts in successfully combating discrimination and intolerance, Türkiye was a party to all relevant international instruments and recognized the added value of regional efforts within the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

113. Amid a rise in hostile acts against religious or ethnic groups, a new form of racism was emerging against Muslims. Incidents of hatred against Muslims could not be allowed under the guise of freedom of expression. That freedom was not absolute but had certain limitations, as acts of religious hatred, racism, discrimination and xenophobia posed a threat to peace. Politicians and the media must combat those threats. Partnerships with opinion leaders, religious communities, civil society and technology companies were needed.

114. Türkiye called on Member States to prohibit the advocacy of hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and to criminalize incitement to violence. Recent events in the Middle East, especially the tragedy in Gaza, were a reminder of the need for tolerance and dialogue.

115. His country welcomed the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution [53/1](#), in which the Council condemned any advocacy or manifestation of religious hatred, including the desecration of the Qur'an. Spearheaded by Türkiye and Spain, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations was a valuable tool for fostering cross-cultural understanding. Another valuable tool was the Istanbul Process, aimed at combating extremism, hatred and racial discrimination, although far more needed to be done to advance its work.

116. **Ms. Mimram Rosenberg** (Israel) said that Hamas terrorists had entered Israel on 7 October 2023 with the sole intention of slaughtering, beheading, raping and abducting as many innocent people as possible. They had come to kill Jews. That was not an act of resistance

or a call for self-determination; it was a terrorist act by a genocidal terrorist organization.

117. Israel did not dispute the right to self-determination. The Jewish people had spent 2,000 years searching for a homeland in which to live free from persecution. Since the formation of the State of Israel, her country had faced continued existential threats and attempts to undermine the legitimacy of its own self-determination.

118. Since the terror attack of 7 October, antisemitism and delegitimization of Israel had reached a critical point. Jews were being attacked worldwide; synagogues had been firebombed; Jewish schools had been closed owing to bomb threats; and Jewish students had been physically assaulted, with calls for their throats to be slit shared on social media. The day before, a lynch mob had nearly formed when people had heard that an aeroplane with Israelis had landed in their city. In the protests that had erupted worldwide after 7 October, people had been calling for the world to be cleansed of Jews and for one Palestinian State to replace the Jewish State, and chants of “gas the Jews” had been heard.

119. The events of 7 October and the days that had followed had shown the importance of the Jewish right to self-determination. Hatred towards Jews still festered around the world, even at the United Nations. More needed to be done to curb antisemitism and combat ideologies that denied the Jewish homeland and sought its destruction.

120. **Mr. Sowa** (Sierra Leone) said that, despite the ratification by 189 countries of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, racism remained a serious problem, with rising white supremacy and a backlash against racial justice. All Member States should take the actions necessary to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms. Collective efforts were needed to promote understanding and make the world equal and fair for all.

121. Eliminating entrenched racist beliefs and systems involved mending an unjust past through education on the harmful effects of racism, the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and the promotion of racial diversity. The root social and economic causes of racism must also be addressed. Redress for victims, including compensation, should be provided as a matter of justice. Member States should demonstrate solidarity, tackle poverty and exclusion, invest in education, and rebuild trust and social cohesion. Stronger political will must be shown, and accelerated actions for racial justice and equality were needed. States must speak out against online and offline hate speech and harassment.

122. Continued support for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and its follow-up processes was needed. Member States needed to scale up the implementation of the four-point agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality in the 2021 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers ([A/HRC/47/53](#)) and the initiatives set out in the 2022 follow-up report ([A/HRC/51/53](#)).

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.