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COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF THEMATIC ISSUES RELATING  
TO THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Written statement\* submitted by Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme,  
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[7 August 2000]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization.

Allow me to make an analogy and compare the Convention against Racism to a bridge. Someone who is planning a journey and knows he will have to cross a fast-flowing river will be delighted to know that the bridge exists, because he can see the possibility of arriving at his goal in time and in optimum conditions to carry out his plans. But it is not enough to know that the bridge exists. If all the stages along the route have been well prepared, crossing the bridge will be a moment of enlightenment, when he will feel the urge to look backwards in safety and hasten onwards, confident that he will reach his planned destination, where the sense of achievement will allow him to dream of continuing.

When we consider the statements, decisions and/or recommendations of the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights or the Sub-Commission aimed at ensuring the holding and the success of the Third World Conference against Racism, we realize that there has been an effort, perhaps not a very combined effort, to gather together reviews, studies and contributions in order to draw up a plan of action - the bridge - but that the essential stages for attaining that bridge have been reduced to the minimum.

Numerous Governments have assembled a large number of the instruments available at national and international level for the fight against racism, so that the various social sectors within each State are able learn about them and use them. In this way the State gives itself the opportunity to speed up the implementation of existing mechanisms and to review the obstacles that need to be overcome to reach the crossing-point - the Conference - in the deep conviction that it has the will and the means to achieve the aims set out in the provisional programme of the Conference. As regards the other part of society, the Plan of Action represents the concerted, credible and shared hope of joint activities in a genuine, persistent and enthusiastic struggle to eradicate all the glaring contemporary and historical evils of all human forms of discrimination and xenophobia.

Every day we are surprised and appalled by the madness of dehumanization, with a generous contribution from technology. In Colombia the paramilitaries have now set up a section called "Black Clover" for the purpose of killing people, black community groups. The victims, who are not the first because the total already exceeds 500, were the people of Sabaletas and Buenaventura in July 2000. This is an example of a discriminatory way of destroying the life and future of a people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, every day that no joint actions are carried out in the resolute battle against racism, the enemies of peace are given the opportunity to settle and spread their wings of discrimination and death, denying to majorities the right to enjoy well-being. Fear of sharing, selfishness, contempt for cultural diversity and the love of gain, put forward as the standard for rational survival, have sown the seeds of genocide and xenophobia throughout history.

Let us promote regional seminars that will provide access to knowledge and to the hidden and unadmitted reality of the discrimination and harming of many communities in the world, including the Afro-American communities.

We need to keep promoting the encounter of humankind, so that as a unified body, on the basis of respect for the difference and for human potential, we can keep our ears and eyes open for the heartbeats and manifestations of the Earth, a planet that does not belong to us, of which we are just a part, but which, blinded by hierarchies of wealth and poverty, not of sadness and joy, we are massacring: destroying the richness of life within a community that respects the ecosystem, destroying the dreams of the majority of the Earth's children, of all of us.

Let us promote greater participation by all sectors, so as to make the preparatory process for this Third World Conference against Racism into a genuine and worldwide daily act of solidarity in the struggle against all latent forms of discrimination, whether social, economic, environmental, political or ethnic, all of which are manifestations of cultural discrimination at global level.

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