



“A global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a matter of priority for the international community.”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is a meeting on racism being held this September?

The United Nations General Assembly decided to commemorate, in 2011, the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), which was adopted at the 31 August-8 September 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in South Africa.

UN Member States decided this commemoration would be a one-day High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly, at the level of Heads of State and Government.

The theme of the meeting is **“Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: recognition, justice and development”**.

2. What will be the outcome?

It is expected that a short, political statement will be adopted at the conclusion of the meeting. The purpose is to mobilize political will to prevent and combat racism and racial discrimination. It will likely acknowledge that the problems of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance remain prevalent in all societies and will commit governments to redoubling efforts to implement the actions outlined in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

3. What role will NGOs have in this High-Level Meeting?

UN Member States decided that all civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who wish to participate in the meeting must be active in the field of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. A representative of an NGO will speak at the opening plenary. Selected representatives will be invited to participate in the roundtable discussions, while others will be able to follow the proceedings of the roundtable sessions in the overflow room.

Non-governmental and civil society organizations have been invited to register their interest in attending. The President of the General Assembly is now preparing a list of representatives of civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations active in the field of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance, for the consideration of Member States.

4. What are some of the highlights of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action? Why is it a valuable document?

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) - adopted by consensus at the World Conference Against Racism - is a comprehensive framework for addressing racism, xenophobia, racial discrimination and related intolerance.

General Assembly High-Level Meeting, 22 September 2011
Tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

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It contains a broad range of measures aimed at combating racism in all of its manifestations, including through education, strengthening the rule of law, and services and resources for victims of racial discrimination. It underscores the human rights of all groups suffering from racial discrimination, emphasizing their right to participate freely and equally in political, social, economic and cultural life.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action:

- Acknowledges that slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity, and should have always been so.
- Adopts a victim-oriented approach to problems of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
- Provides specific recommendations to combat discrimination against Africans and persons of African descent, Asians and persons of Asian descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, minorities, the Roma and other groups.
- Emphasizes the importance of preventive and concerted action, especially in the field of education and awareness-raising, and calls for the strengthening of human rights education;
- Recalls that the Holocaust must never be forgotten;
- Urges governments to provide effective remedies, recourse, redress and compensatory measures to victims and to ensure that victims have access to legal assistance so they can pursue such measures; and
- Assigns the primary responsibility of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to States, It also calls for the active involvement of international and non-governmental organizations, political parties, national human rights institutions, the private sector, the media and civil society at large.

5. Why commemorate this document ten years after it was originally adopted?

Despite progress made since 2001, instances of xenophobia, racism and intolerance have almost certainly increased in frequency and severity. Racist attitudes and hate speech can be found in many countries and the internet provides a new vehicle for their proliferation. There is a clear need for committed implementation of what was agreed to in Durban.

This year's anniversary provides the opportunity to recommit to actual implementation of the actions outlined in the DDPA and for all countries, individually and collectively, to intensify efforts aimed at reducing instances of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

6. Why has the original conference in Durban been criticized? What went wrong in 2001?

A polarized debate on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in a meeting of non-governmental organizations (called the "NGO Forum") – an event running parallel to the UN conference – pitted anti-Semitism voices on one side and anti-Islamophobia voices on the other. The debate reached a low point when virulently anti-Semitic materials were circulated. As a result, then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson declined to forward the NGO Forum's outcome document to the UN World Conference.

The confusion between what happened at the NGO Forum and its outcome document, versus the UN World Conference and its very different outcome document, fuels many of the misperceptions about anti-Israel sentiment in relation to the World Conference.

7. What does the DDPA say about anti-Semitism?

The Declaration "expresses deep concern about the increase in anti-Semitism" (paragraph 61) and about increasing prejudice related to religious beliefs. The Programme of Action calls upon all States to counter anti-Semitism worldwide (paragraph 150).



8. What does the DDPA say about Islamophobia?

Islamophobia and religious intolerance are growing problems in some parts of the world. The Declaration expresses deep concern over the increase in Islamophobia as well as “the emergence of racial and violent movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities” (paragraph 61). The Programme of Action calls upon all States to counter Islamophobia world-wide (paragraph 150).

9. Why is Israel the only Member State mentioned in the DDPA?

Israel is the only Member State mentioned by name in the DDPA, a reflection of the international concern about the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian situation. The two paragraphs that name Israel are factual and balanced and occur in the following context:

- While recognizing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, the Declaration recognizes “the right to security for all States in the region, including Israel” and calls upon “all States to support the peace process and bring it to an early conclusion” (paragraph 63 of the Durban Declaration). The Declaration further called for “a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region in which all peoples shall co-exist and enjoy equality, justice and internationally recognized human rights and security” (paragraph 64 of the Durban Declaration).

With respect to the situation in the Middle East, the Programme of Action calls for “the end of violence and the swift resumption of negotiations, respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, respect for the principle of self-determination and the end of all suffering, thus allowing Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom” (paragraph 151 of the Programme of Action).

10. What else does the DDPA say relating to Israel?

There are a total of 341 paragraphs in the DDPA. Of these, there are 6 paragraphs that relate to Israel, Palestinians, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. In addition to the five paragraphs cited above, the other paragraph is the following:

“We recall that the Holocaust must never be forgotten” (paragraph 58 of the Durban Declaration).

11. How will victims of racism be helped by the September 2011 meeting?

This meeting provides the opportunity for Governments to focus on the concerns of victims and for world leaders to recommit to take effective action to end racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.