



Issue 2
February 2001

Durban 2001

United against Racism

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM SECRETARIAT

From the desk of the High Commissioner

This second issue of our newsletter addresses some of the causes, victims and contemporary forms of racism.

We also report on preparations for Durban. It is encouraging to see how these preparations are engaging the international community and making for some real debate on some very difficult issues. Encouraging because there is no shortage of skepticism – even cynicism – in some quarters about what the Conference can achieve. The doubters claim that too often international gatherings are long on fine words but short on action. What we have seen so far during the preparatory process for Durban, however, presages something very constructive. The regional Conference of the Americas in Santiago, held last December, is illustrative of the healthy debate that the World Conference is engendering. There, indigenous representatives told the meeting in no uncertain terms that they would not be relegated to the role of tokens. They wanted, they said, real participation. The meeting allowed the region to address some very painful issues in an open, constructive way. The question of the indigenous and of the complex and subtle forms of discrimination that affect people of African descent were broached as never before, a salutary airing of problems that permitted one to envisage a better – or at least a more honest – future for race relations in the region.

Preparations for the World Conference have been fruitful, but to really prove the doubters wrong we must work to have a ringing declaration and a realistic programme of action with a review mechanism. The World Conference should not be a talking shop. Countries should examine their records in improving relations between different groups that make up their societies. Everyone ought to face up to the origins of racism and discrimination and come to terms with the wounds of history, including slavery, pogroms, the brutalities of colonialism and genocide.

Will the international community be up to the challenge? We cannot afford to answer “no”.

Mary Robinson

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
and Secretary General of the World Conference against
Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia
and Related Intolerance



Indigenous peoples of the Americas come together in Santiago. (Secretariat photo)

Chile Conference recognizes victims of racism

The Inter-Governmental Regional Conference of the Americas met in Santiago, Chile from 5-7 December 2000 and adopted a comprehensive Declaration and Plan of Action, which recognized the victims of racism in the region and the role of prevention. The Declaration urged States to adopt remedial measures to combat racial discrimination and intolerance in the region. The meeting was attended by over a thousand people from almost every country in the Americas. There were thirty-nine Government delegations, many national institutions and intergovernmental organizations from the region, and several hundred NGO representatives. The Conference received wide press coverage and public attention.

Organized by the Government of the Republic of Chile in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Conference met

in Plenary, as well as in two parallel Committees which produced the Declaration and Plan of Action, respectively.

The Conference was chaired by Mr. Hernando Muñoz of Chile. The Vice-Chairpersons were: Mr. Hernando Couturier (Peru), Ms. Mia Mottley (Barbados), Ms. Hedy Fry (Canada), Mr. Gilberto Saboia (Brazil) and Mr. Alfredo López Araujo (Ecuador). Ms. Angela Garoz Cabrera (Guatemala) served as General Rapporteur of the Conference.

Although it was a meeting of Governments, numerous individuals representing various NGOs took the floor to address the Plenary sessions, and present their hopes for communities and countries free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and their strategies to combat racism in the hemisphere.

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Racism and Religion Racism and

The OHCHR Expert Seminar, which took place in Addis Ababa in October 2000 to prepare for the World Conference against Racism, recognized the dual impact that religion can have on racism. The Seminar concluded that:

“the role of religion and its potential as a catalyst for conflict should be studied, monitored, and its impact documented in a systematic and sustained manner.”

But, it also concluded that:

“the positive role of religion should ... be factored in and harnessed more creatively in the search for lasting solutions to the problems of conflict.”

The following articles reflect this duality. Abdelfattah Amor, the United Nations Human Rights Commission Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance, calls for recognition of the grave consequences suffered by victims of “aggravated discrimination.” Bawa Jain, the Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, encourages religious leaders to combat racism and strive to ensure that religion does not become a catalyst for conflict.

“Combating racism is not within a sprinter’s capability; the task is rather designed for a marathon runner. The greatest evolutions are not achieved with a magic wand, but through struggle, progressively, step by step.” Abdelfattah Amor

Two Views



Racism and Religious Intolerance: Aggravated Discrimination

Abdelfattah Amor is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance. His mandate is to examine and report on incidents and governmental actions in all parts of the world which are inconsistent with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, and to recommend remedial measures for such situations. The Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1999/78 asked Mr. Amor to participate actively in the preparations for the World Conference against Racism.

Abdelfattah Amor states that, “all religions are based on values of tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for human rights.” He is convinced that, “for a real believer, accepting and respecting others should be part of religion.” Yet, all States, without exception, have situations of discrimination or intolerance with respect to religion or belief.

According to the Special Rapporteur, the issue of religious intolerance is important to the World Conference against Racism as it is impossible to dissociate racism from other forms of intolerance. In his last interim report on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, Amor introduced the concept of “aggravated discrimination” which, unlike that of multiple discrimination, recognizes the gravity of an accumulation of violations. “If you are ... of a certain racial or ethnic group; if you happen to be a woman; and you also practice a certain religion while suffering unbearable social conditions; the matter goes beyond an accumulation of infractions. It becomes something much worse that States and the international community should address.”

In his report, he explained that, few international legal instruments contain specific provisions to address aggravated discrimination. When perpetrators are brought before the courts, which is not often, the case may conclude with concurrent sentences or with penalties that are relatively light given the consequences suffered by victims. Amor hopes to see aggravated discrimination and its consequences considered in Durban.

The Special Rapporteur understands that the slow process of change can be frustrating. However, he believes that there is no easy solution to the problems of racism and religious intolerance. “All claims, notwithstanding their relevance and importance, should come within the framework of the United Nations and follow a judicial process.” He also thinks that significant progress in the fight against racism has been made in the last few decades. Amor states that, “combating racism is not within a sprinter’s capability; the task is rather designed for a marathon runner. The greatest evolutions are not achieved with a magic wand, but through struggle, progressively, step by step.”

and Religion Racism and Religion

"Durban is a unique opportunity to bring together again religious leaders and continue the dialogue.

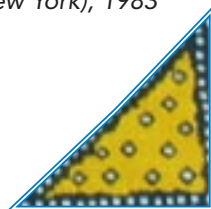
As we prepare for the World Conference against Racism, my hope is that religious leaders will respond to this opportunity and in a show of unity approach this battle as one of the great challenges of the new century."

Bawa Jain

Voices against Racism

"We slept in a dorm together. Six or seven or eight of us. They showed me how things worked and helped me out when I was stuck. We'd play cards at night, or go into town together on days off. Then things happened. They asked me to move into a different room, so they could have more space in the dorm. Why didn't they ask one of their own kind to move? They asked me because I was the foreigner. I was different ... They punish you for being different, don't you know that?"

Wendy Law Yone,
The Coffin Tree
Random House (New York), 1983



Religious Leaders Commit to Fight Intolerance

Bawa Jain is Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the co-founder of the Religious Initiative of the World Economic Forum, which took place in Davos, Switzerland in late January. At Davos, the religious leaders endorsed a program designed to bring the moral authority of religion to the challenges of the global agenda. In response to a request by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bawa Jain has made a commitment to engage religious leaders to support the International Day against Racism on 21 March. He also committed the leaders to actively participate in the World Conference and in the implementation of its Plan of Action. Bawa Jain plans to put together a book on the perspectives of different religious traditions on racism and religious intolerance.

On 28 August 2000, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, more than 1000 religious leaders from over 110 countries and from all major religions and faith traditions gathered at the United Nations in New York. They were there to attend the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders where they made a commitment to work together for world peace.

At the heart of the Summit was the desire expressed by religious leaders to put aside theological differences and focus on common values. It is through such united efforts that the critical problems facing the human family such as armed conflict, violence of poverty and intolerance, and violence committed against the environment may be addressed.

One objective was to encourage religious leaders in every region to exert greater influence on reconciliation, healing and forgiveness within communities where there is tension. The acceptance of diversity by religious leaders is a first step in building societies free of intolerance. Religious leaders and organizations can facilitate this process through their extensive educational networks.

An important outcome of the Summit was the signing of the Commitment to Global Peace. It is based on the concept that every religious tradition teaches that one must treat one's neighbour as oneself, regardless of racial, religious, ethnic, national, economic, age and gender differences. The leaders affirmed "a renewed commitment to ethical and spiritual values, including a deep sense of respect for all life and for each person's inherent dignity and right to live in a world free of violence." The practice of this principle is still one of the main challenges facing religion.

Religion-based conflicts were a common concern for the religious leaders. Approximately 80 percent of the violent conflicts taking place in the world today are portrayed in the name of religion. In many regions, including some of the most affluent nations, racial differences create underlying tensions, leading to sporadic violence. Religion can and must play a key role in healing these divisions by focusing on what is common to us all. The true practice of religion can create an enabling environment for people to perceive their kinship with others — our common humanity.

Religious institutions and communities can encourage their members to reflect on their racial and religious attitudes, realizing that to achieve the goals of their own faith tradition, they are morally bound to practice respect and understanding for all. A number of faith-based organizations are taking specific steps to promote greater awareness of intolerance. For example, some groups hold interfaith forums to discuss the subjects of intolerance and racism.

It would be a tremendous step forward if religious leaders of all major faith traditions strongly endorsed this moral responsibility and publicly condemned intolerance as a form of violence harmful to the individual and society.

Durban is a unique opportunity to bring together again religious leaders and continue the dialogue. As we prepare for the World Conference against Racism, my hope is that religious leaders will respond to this opportunity and in a show of unity approach this battle as one of the great challenges of the new century.

Bawa Jain

NGO Meetings relating to WCAR themes

An increasing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are organizing meetings and conferences relating to World Conference themes. The OHCHR will obviously pay special attention to such meetings. However, it has decided to discontinue its practice of granting "satellite" status to meetings organized by NGOs in connection with the World Conference. This because there has been a growth of activities at the national, regional and international level and a similarly large increase in the number of "satellite" requests. OHCHR is unable to take part in all of these activities and it does not have the resources to evaluate every meeting request. It is also difficult to practically apply a uniform criteria for granting or not granting "satellite" status. Therefore, the existing rules of procedure of the Preparatory Committee will be the only basis for NGO submissions to the second session of the Preparatory Committee. If an NGO wishes to organize a meeting at the national, regional or international level, it can submit a pre-session executive summary of the meeting results within the existing word limitations for pre-session documents. Or, NGOs can make an oral statement to the Preparatory Committee under the appropriate agenda item about a national, regional or international activity they have organized.

*Word limits for pre-session documents:
2000 words for NGOs having general status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)*

1500 words for NGOs having special or roster status with ECOSOC or those specially accredited by the Preparatory Committee in accordance with ECOSOC resolution 1996/31

An informal exchange of views

Informal consultations on the World Conference against Racism took place at Palais des Nations in Geneva on 15 and 16 January 2001.

The chairperson of the meeting, Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo from Senegal, said that the consultations represented "the first occasion for the various role-players of the World Conference to exchange their views."

The meeting was attended by many representatives from Member States, specialized agencies, United Nations bodies, NGOs and other accredited observers.

The consultation yielded a positive exchange of views about possible sub-themes for the Conference. Oral and written contributions were presented by several States' representatives, UN specialized

agencies and NGOs.

In her closing remarks, the High Commissioner thanked the participants for their role in preparing for the Conference and declared that, "the ideas expressed during this meeting significantly contributed to this work in progress." She said that, "the wealth of information before us now must be streamlined to achieve the desired result to have a concrete, on-target, action-oriented document."

The Open-ended Inter-session Working Group, currently scheduled to be held in Geneva from 6 to 9 March 2001, will have an opportunity to consider a draft text of the World Conference against Racism Declaration and Plan of Action prepared by the Secretariat of the World Conference.

Voices against Racism

"... but in these parts education itself was an ethnic problem. What language would Gypsies be taught in? Magyar in Transylvania and Romanian everywhere else? What about Romani? Gypsies dropped out of school for the same reason that most people drop out of school. They failed at it. And they failed because the language used in school was not the language most of them spoke at home. No special language provisions were made for them (as they were for the Hungarian and German minorities). So they lost their language, or their chances, or, more usually, they lost both. Although it is slowly changing, this was the case all over Central and Eastern Europe, with the result that in many places Gypsy children from the first grades were automatically stuck into special schools for the mentally handicapped. They weren't retarded, but they were handicapped: they didn't speak the language, and the deficiency had become a widespread excuse for segregation and indeed incarceration – one not likely to be fought by illiterate parents, themselves accustomed to such frank dispossession."

*Isabel Fonseca,
Bury Me Standing
Random House (New York), 1995*

Pre - Conference Calendar

what	when	where	contact
Regional Meeting for Africa	22-24 January 2001	Dakar (Senegal)	Abdou Aziz Ndiaye / andiaye.hchr@unog.ch Tel: (+41 22) 917 9826 / Fax: (+41 22) 917 9050
Regional Meeting for Asia	19-21 February 2001	Tehran (Islamic Republic of Iran)	Lyal Sunga / lsunga.hchr@unog.ch Tel: (+41-22) 917 9168 / Fax: (+41-22) 917 9050
Open-ended Inter-session Working Group	6-9 March 2001 (tentative)	Palais des Nations (Geneva)	Helga Klein / hklein.hchr@unog.ch Tel: (+41 22) 917 9310 / Fax: (+41 22) 917 9050
Second Session of the Preparatory Committee	21 May – 1 June 2001	Palais des Nations (Geneva)	Robert Husbands / husbands.hchr@unog.ch Tel: (+41 22) 917 9290 / Fax: (+41 22) 917 9050

Citizens of the Americas hold their own Conference

Fifteen-hundred representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and indigenous peoples' organizations met at the Diego Portales Conference Centre in Santiago on 2 and 3 December 2000, to participate in the NGO Forum – the Conference of Citizens against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Many also participated in the Inter-Governmental Regional Conference of the Americas, which took place from 5 to 7 December.

They came to Santiago, Chile from every region of the Americas and reflected the diversity of the hemisphere – Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, Canadians and Americans of Asian descent, Roma people, Jews, immigrants, refugees and displaced persons. They were united by a common cause: the fight against racism. Some participants had travelled more than 52 hours by bus.

The Conference of Citizens, which was organized by the Chile-based IDEAS Foundation supported by OHCHR, contributed to an increased awareness about racism in the

region. Perhaps the most significant contribution was the adoption of an NGO Declaration entitled, "Conference of Citizens against Racism, Xenophobia, Intolerance and Discrimination" which declares, among other things, the following:

"We recognise the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Afro-Americans and Caribbeans as essential parts of the fabric of the identity and diversity of our continent, America being a place of co-existence of different races and cultures who joined the indigenous peoples, making us the privileged heirs of a very rich diversity."

"We claim our right to our own interpretation and historical truth, and demand recognition of the historical significance of resistances and struggles... Likewise we urge a cautious and critical approach to the predominant outside versions, which have aided the concealment and denial of the past and present reality of exploitation, slavery and servitude."

...



Two indigenous women at the Conference of Citizens. (Secretariat photo)

"We resolutely condemn xenophobic practices and prejudices, which are used to abuse immigrants and justify their economic exploitation..."

...

"We condemn racial discrimination as a phenomenon that wholly threatens the survival of the indigenous peoples..."

...

The NGO participants organized themselves into caucuses and other groupings in order to draft the document and lobby during the inter-governmental meetings. There was also a round-table of Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples, and a gender caucus and youth caucus. These groups hope to continue working together, and to inspire similar caucuses in other regions.

For many of the NGOs at the Conference of Citizens, this regional meeting was their first opportunity to discuss the various dimensions of racism – such as its causes, consequences and strategies to combat it. It involved analysis, advocacy and networking, both with other NGOs and governments. The Conference was an opportunity to search for common ground and build alliances and bridges. To demonstrate this, there was a parade of solidarity through downtown Santiago.

The challenge now facing these citizens is to follow-up on their Declaration and to work with NGOs in other regions of the world in order to shape the NGO Forum in Durban and influence the outcomes of the World Conference against Racism.



Two participants look over the NGO Declaration. (Secretariat photo)

Voices against Racism

"A los hijos de español y de mestiza, o de mestizo y española, llaman cuatralvos, por decir que tienen cuarta parte de indio y tres de español. A los hijos de mestizo y de india o de indio y de mestiza llaman tresalvos, por decir que tienen tres partes de indio y una de español. Todos estos nombres y otros que por excusar hastío dejamos de decir, se han inventado en mi tierra para nombrar las generaciones que ha habido después que los españoles fueron a ella; y podemos decir que ellos los llevaron con las demás cosas que no había antes."
– El Inca Garcilosa de la Vega (1539-1617)

Francisco Canillo,

Enciclopedia histórica de la literatura peruana (8), Cronistas indios y mestizos III, Editorial Horizonte (Lima), 1996

Chile Conference recognizes



A young indigenous boy from Peru addresses the Plenary. (Secretariat photo)

Continued from front page ... The High Commissioner for Human Rights and Secretary General of the World Conference against Racism, Mary Robinson, gave an address during the opening ceremonies. She said that the region "...from South America to Central America; from the Caribbean to North America – is a rich and complex mixture of racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups...[and]...of great racial and cultural diversity, and [therein] lay a hidden wealth and capacity for mutual enrichment." She urged the States "to rise to the challenge and overcome racism and xenophobia thereby ensur[ing] political and economic stability and the progressive realization of just and fair societies throughout the region. To fail to meet this challenge is simply unthinkable."

Several heads of delegations and senior ministers addressed the Plenary meetings, including Mr. Essop Pahad, Minister in the Office of the President of the Republic of South Africa. The President of the Republic of Chile, Mr. Ricardo Lagos spoke at the 7 December Plenary session. During his address, a group of indigenous representatives came to the podium to protest what they considered the failure of the Conference to recognize them as indigenous peoples – with an "s".

President Lagos stated the following, "I know the theme we are dealing with is a complex and difficult one, but it is not with these methods that we will further the understanding between the various sectors of our societies. [...] Our Latin American societies have come a long way since the meeting of two worlds [indigenous peoples and Spanish descendants]. Such meeting has marked the beginning of one's domination over the other. Incidents like the one that just occurred originate from such domination, which is a problem that still remains to be solved."

That afternoon, the Committee which drafted the Declaration agreed, after

lengthy discussions, to the term "indigenous peoples."

A preambular paragraph states that "...the term "peoples" in this document can not be construed as having any implications as to the rights which attach to the term under international law. The rights associated with the term "indigenous peoples" have a context-specific meaning that is appropriately determined in the multilateral negotiations in the texts of declarations that specifically deal with such rights."

"In a spirit of renewed political will and engagement," the Conference adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action which reaffirmed that "the history of the Americas has often been characterized by racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that telling the truth about history of and ongoing manifestations of racism in the Americas is essential for reconciliation and to build societies based on justice, equality and solidarity."

The Declaration also reaffirmed the "right of all peoples to live in a society free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as well as the duty of States to take prompt, decisive and appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination whenever, wherever and however they occur."

On 7 December, the Governments participating in the Regional Conference of the Americas adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action. Selected provisions are reported in this article.¹

Victims of Racism

The Governments recognized that "in the Americas the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are the indigenous peoples, people of African descent, migrants and other ethnic, racial, cultural, religious and linguistic groups or minorities affected by those scourges." It also recognized the value and contribution of their traditions, cultures and identities to the development of the societies of the Americas. The Conference also confirmed that, at the same time, in many countries sectors made up of indigenous peoples, people of African descent, migrants and other victims were also those where poverty was most intense. (paragraphs 11-13).

Indigenous Peoples

"Recognize the value and diversity of

the cultures and the heritage of indigenous peoples, whose singular contribution to the development and cultural pluralism of the societies of the region and full participation in all aspects of society, in particular on issues that are of concern to them, are fundamental for political and social stability, and for the development of the States in which they live." (paragraph 19)

"Also recognize the special relationship that indigenous peoples have with the land as the basis for their physical and cultural existence." (paragraph 20)

People of African Descent

"Also recognize that the legacy of slavery has contributed to perpetuating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against people of African descent throughout the region. Also note the disastrous consequences of slavery, which are at the root of the situations of profound social and economic inequality which generally victimize people of African descent in the Americas." (paragraph 28)

"Consider it essential for all countries in the region to recognize the existence of their population of African descent, the cultural, economic, political and scientific contributions made by that population and recognize the persistence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that specifically affect them. Recognize that, in many countries, their longstanding inequality in terms of access to, inter alia, education, health care and housing has been a profound cause of the socio-economic disparities that affect them." (paragraph 29)

Migrants

"Reaffirm the responsibility of Governments to safeguard and protect the human rights of migrants living in their territory and under their jurisdiction against illegal acts by their agents or by individuals or groups motivated by racism, xenophobia or related intolerance." (paragraph 35)

Mestizos

"Recognize the existence of a mestizo population of different ethnic and racial origins, to a large extent as the result of the history of colonization and slavery in the American continent, in which unequal relations of race and gender were joined." (paragraph 41)



victims of racism

Victims of Aggravated or Multiple Discrimination

The Governments identified victims of aggravated and multiple discrimination such as women, children, persons infected or affected with HIV/AIDS and recognized the close association between poverty and racism. The Governments also note that this situation can result in such persons being victims of multiple forms of discrimination; and stress that special attention should be given to the elaboration of strategies, policies and programmes, which may include affirmative action, for those persons who may be the victims of multiple forms of discrimination." (paragraph 51)

Globalization

The Governments "[e]xpress[ed] their determination to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of globalization. These effects may contribute to, inter alia, cultural homogenization, economic inequality within and between States. These may occur along racial lines, or may be based on the social and economic exclusion of peoples, communities and groups, especially those who continue to endure the legacy of slavery and colonialism. Also express our determination to maximize the benefits of globalization through strengthening cooperation to create increased opportunities for trade, economic growth and sustainable development, global communications through the use of new technologies and increased inter-cultural exchange through the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, which may contribute to the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance." (paragraph 10)

Legal Liability of States: Investigation and Reparation

They "[r]ecall that it is the legal duty of States to carry out exhaustive, timely and impartial investigations of all acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or related intolerance, to penalize those responsible according to the law and to secure prompt and fair reparation for the victims." (paragraph 68)

Reconciliation

The Governments also "[a]cknowledge that the enslavement and other forms of servitude of Africans and their descendants and of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, as well as the slave trade, were morally reprehensible, in some cases constituted crimes under domestic law and, if they occurred today, would constitute crimes under international law. Acknowledge that these practices have resulted in substantial and lasting economic, political and cultural damage to these peoples and that justice now requires that substantial national and international efforts be made to repair such damage. Such reparation should be in the form of policies, programmes and measures to be adopted by the States which benefited materially from these practices, and designed to rectify the economic, cultural and political damage which has been inflicted on the affected communities and peoples."² (paragraph 70)



Mr. Pahad of South Africa, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, President Lagos of Chile and Mr. Muñoz of Chile, at the Conference of the Americas. (Secretariat photo)

NGOs and Youth

In the Plan of Action, the Governments "[c]all upon States, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, to facilitate an international youth dialogue on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, through the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system and through the use of new technologies, exchanges and other means; and to take measures to facilitate the full involvement of youth in the

preparatory process for the World Conference against Racism ... through consultation at the national and international levels and the inclusion of youth in their national delegations." (paragraph 173)

Women

In the Plan of Action, States were urged "... to incorporate a gender perspective into all programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to consider the burden of discrimination that particularly falls on indigenous women, women of African descent, women migrants and women from other disadvantaged groups, ensuring their access to the resources of production on an equal footing with men, as means of promoting their participation in the development of the economy and output of their communities." (paragraph 141) They were also urged to "... involve women in decision-making at all levels when working towards the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and to develop concrete measures to incorporate race/gender analysis in all aspects of the Plan of Action, particularly in the fields of employment programmes and services and resource allocation." (paragraph 142)

...
The Governments of the Americas adopted a wide-ranging and inclusive Declaration and Plan of Action, which recognized the victims of racism. It will be the responsibility of the World Conference against Racism to recommend that the international community work to ensure that such inclusive commitments change the lives of excluded peoples in the region.

The full texts of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Conference of the Americas (WCR/IC/2001/Misc.5) are available on the OHCHR website at www.unhchr.ch
The full report of the Conference will be available for the second session of the Preparatory Committee of the World Conference.

¹ Please note that at press time, the Declaration and Plan of Action were still subject to editorial comments by the States that participated in the Regional Conference of the Americas.

² Canada and the United States of America did not agree to the inclusion of this paragraph. For the text of their objections, please refer to the Report of the Conference.

Preparations for the WCAR in Australia

The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) is preparing for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) and facilitating broader discussion of racism and the World Conference in the Australian community.



Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner Dr. William Jonas addressed regional cooperation in preparation for the WCAR when he presented a paper to the Fifth Annual Meeting of Asia Pacific National Human Rights Institutions in New Zealand in August 2000. The meeting established a basis for national human rights institutions to share information and strategies in the lead-up to the WCAR.

In December 2000, HREOC brought the Reverend Dr. Barney Pityana, Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, to Australia to promote the WCAR. Dr. Pityana met with NGOs to discuss WCAR preparations; addressed a human rights and diversity conference; and spoke at the ceremony for the Commission's Human Rights Day Awards and Human Rights Medal.

Dr. Pityana also addressed HREOC's Women and Race Forum, along with the Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner Dr. William Jonas and Sex Discrimination Commissioner Susan Halliday. More than 85 women attended the forum to discuss women's experiences of racism. In particular the forum provided an opportunity for both indigenous, refugee and migrant women to examine discrimination on the basis of race and gender and to compare their experiences.

At the forum the Commission launched two on-line discussion groups, one for indigenous women and one for immigrant and refugee women. These electronic discussion groups enable women to discuss racial discrimination and anti-racist strategies and contribute to preparations for the Conference by conveying their concerns to HREOC. The discussion groups complement a series of Australian WCAR pages currently being prepared for the Commission's website.

HREOC has held meetings with a number of NGOs to facilitate broader discussion of the themes of the Conference and is encouraging NGOs to apply for accreditation to the Conference.

The Commission is seeking funding to hold a National Dialogue on Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance during 2001. The Dialogue, planned as a two-day conference, will bring together representatives of government, HREOC, and a broad cross-section of the Australian community including young people, the business community, indigenous, refugee and migrant communities and religious and faith groups. The dialogue process will identify and discuss key race issues in Australia, develop effective strategies to combat racism and assist the preparation of delegates and observers to WCAR meetings.

The Commission is responding to the request for suggestions by High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, for the drafting of the World Conference against Racism Draft Declaration and Program of Action and to prepare a series of papers to be released throughout 2001 exploring race issues in Australia.

For further information on HREOC's preparations for the WCAR, contact TimGoodwin@humanrights.gov.au

HREOC is on the web at www.hreoc.gov.au

Voices against Racism

"It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity."

*Nelson Mandela,
Long Walk to Freedom
Little, Brown and Company (London), 1994*

Overcoming myths in Costa Rica

The Costa Rican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the leadership of its Deputy Minister, Master Elayne Whyte, initiated a consultation process with civil society on the issue of racism. The purpose of the consultation was to reach consensus on a national position for the World Conference against Racism. Meetings took place from 4 October to 15 November 2000, with a wide range of representatives from Afro-Costa Rican, indigenous and Chinese communities, NGOs, cultural associations, public institutions, the academic community and other interested persons.

The main objective of the consultation was to diagnose social perceptions on the themes of the Conference in order to define the areas that required more attention. This process resulted in a series of proposals based on national engagement, and a document, which outlines the national position for the World Conference. The document focuses on: (1) a diagnosis of racism, xenophobia, racial discrimination and related intolerance in Costa Rica and (2) government proposals to fight these problems.

The consultation discovered that Costa Rica's identity was built on "myths" which suggested that Costa Ricans are "equal, pacifist, tolerant and anti-racist, kind, democratic, and free to express themselves." According to the consultation, such perceptions prevent the population from recognizing the existence of "residual racism." This residual racism is reflected in certain sectors of the population in the form of social prejudice.

Like every country in the Americas, Costa Rica has forged its identity through the contribution of various ethnic groups. Despite the importance of their contribution, the consultation found that these groups still need additional affirmative policies to protect them. Indigenous and African descendants do not receive the attention that they deserve, and economic indicators reflect this lack of attention.

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance must be combated at different levels. Legal regulations have been introduced in

Costa Rica to fight these problems. However, issues such as group discrimination, the use of the Internet to promote discrimination and the traffic of migrants remain uncovered by the law. Education is one of the key elements in combating discrimination. For years, the Costa Rican educational system reflected only the vision of European descendants, leaving no room for other perceptions of the world. The consultation found that the history of Costa Rica is incomplete and must be rewritten as it does not take into account the contributions of minority groups. In this regard, the bilingual teaching process that is taking place in indigenous communities must be acknowledged, although its contents and curricula still remain to be improved.

The absence of representatives from non-dominant groups in national institutions was one of the concerns highlighted by representatives of minority groups during the consultation process. The same distortion is present in the structures of the main political parties, which only consider minority groups when there is an election.

Another essential aspect of the diagnosis was a review of the role of media as public opinion makers. The lack of information available to minority groups, combined with the interests of dominant groups, contribute to the continuation of stereotypes and prejudices.

The consultation resulted in several key proposals which were transmitted to the Presidential High Committee in charge of structuring a national policy to address racial discrimination. The proposals include:

- a formal recognition, through constitutional reform, of the multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multilingual nature of our country;
- the promotion of a study on the applicability and legal efficiency of international human rights instruments which address the issue of racism in our country;
- the adoption of legal measures to protect cultural goods as well as the culture of the different ethnic and linguistic groups;
- the promotion of legislative initiatives that recognize ethnic and linguistic diversity;
- the promotion of a study on legal structures and representation structures in public institutions;
- the promotion of campaigns on rights that protect the population, with a focus on minority groups;
- the reinforcement of laws that punish racist, discriminatory and xenophobic propaganda;
- the revision of punitive laws in order to identify racist practices as offences, including the creation and maintenance of websites;
- the promotion of racist, discriminatory and xenophobic behaviour as a reason for the dismissal of high-ranking civil servants;
- the reinforcement of measures against intermediaries who promote the smuggling of migrant workers in return for payment; and,
- the reinforcement of measures against individuals who exploit migrants working illegally.

Voices against Racism

"I am not a final product, Mrs. Livingston. I am a process. As are you. As is everyone. It is to me the most unsettling, and most reassuring, truth about what young people today call "identity". My dear, I haven't got an identity. None of us does. What a great tragedy that would be, don't you think?"

*Neil Bissoondath,
The Worlds Within Her
©1998 by Neil Bissoondath
Alfred A. Knopf Canada, a division of
Random House of Canada Ltd.*

A Reflection on the Role of the

The mass media reflects our world. They should do so independently, fully and impartially. However, the media (understood as print and electronic media, advertising and the Internet) are part of society and so one often finds there the same discrimination, prejudice and intolerance that one finds in society. Given the impact and reach of the media, they have greater potential to help protect human rights and fight racism.

Invisibility, visibility and stereotypes

In the information age and in the era of globalization, the impact of the media is a fact. While the situation has improved substantially as compared to twenty or even ten years ago, it is ironic that some visible minorities and their stories are seldom portrayed on television and movie screens.

When a group or its members are portrayed, it is all too often in a certain "stereotypical" manner – as criminals, terrorists, foreigners, tricksters, entertainers, unemployed, unintelligent, impoverished. The juxtaposition of imagery can be powerful and subliminal messages can be easily conveyed. These images can affect people's perceptions and attitudes. They can also impact public opinion about domestic social policy, law reform, policing and immigration policy, and even international cooperation.

This powerful impact must be soberly considered because often one's knowledge of or exposure to other peoples, cultures and religions comes from the media. The other side of the coin is that, for certain groups or peoples, the very depiction of their group via the media can either be destructive and negative or reassuring, life affirming, and encouraging.

It is important that the media carefully assess the processes by which they make editorial decisions because the repeated depiction of certain persons or racial or ethnic groups has the incredible potential to become reality to some people. A 1996 study by professors Franklin Gilliam and Shanto Iyengar of the University of California at Los Angeles illustrates this point. After analyzing the broadcast content of a local television station, they found that television viewers were so accustomed to seeing African-American crime suspects on the local news that even when the race of a suspect was not identified, the viewers tended to remember seeing a black suspect.

Complete and considered coverage

Today, by simply turning on the television, one is immediately connected to people in a country thousands of kilometres away. Television news media, in particular, have

been accused of having the so-called "24-hour news syndrome" – where the presence and attention of certain media sources can sometimes mean the difference between coverage of an issue or not, or even life and death of the victims in the story.

Sometimes the duration, focus and manner of the coverage, beg the question: is the coverage of some countries or regions more valuable? Are the lives and human rights of some human beings deemed worthier than others?

In the quest for an interesting sound bite, and in the face of ever-shortening deadlines the news media cannot forget their duty to present the full picture. They must strive to be the impartial witnesses to conflict, to the suffering of victims, and to racial discrimination and religious intolerance. They are often the only voices and present the only images of people who have no voice or portrayal.

It is also important to be aware that the language of race is often coded: "poor," "foreigner," "disadvantaged," "underprivileged" and "inner city" can be euphemisms for certain groups. As such, their usage must be carefully weighted and put in context.

The media have responsibilities with regard to the content, objectivity and reliability of information they disseminate to the public. The coverage of issues, incidents and the experience of peoples should be complete and balanced. Coverage should reflect as much as possible the history and context of the people and groups involved. Victims of conflict and racial discrimination should be given a chance to speak in their own voices. The media can also ask itself: Is our coverage sensitive to issues of gender and age? Do we pay attention to stories that concern special communities and vulnerable groups?

Some media sources have begun the process of self-reflection. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), based in Brussels, has created the International Media Working Group Against Racism and Xenophobia (IMRAX) which is dedicated to raising awareness within media and promoting the highest standards of journalism concerned with reporting on matters of race, tolerance and multiculturalism.

The Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) in the United States has developed a code of ethics and professional conduct. On the topic of fairness, the RTNDA code states that "professional electronic journalists should...seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype." Other media associations and journalism schools are looking at their training and recruitment practices. These are

good examples of the media empowering themselves to enforce self-regulation and achieve higher editorial standards.

Media victims of racism

Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and seek, receive and impart information and ideas regardless of frontiers."

When examining the role of the media, one should be reminded of the difficult conditions in which they work. Journalists and broadcasters can themselves become the victims of racism or discrimination, particularly in times of conflict. Their independence can be threatened, and journalists and media in general are at risk of becoming propaganda tools of governments. In various regions of the world, journalists are harassed, detained, tortured, or even murdered. During ethnic and racial conflicts this situation can become heightened. Post-conflict periods are a crucial time during which governments, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs can work together to help rebuild or re-establish an independent and pluralistic media.

In 1998, the OHCHR supported an Expert Seminar on the Role of the Media in Protecting Minorities. The Seminar found that "attacks on journalists and their families and property, and press covering ethnic conflicts, minorities' issues and related human rights issues can lead to self-censorship," and that "governments should ensure that adequate protection is provided to both journalists reporting on these issues, in particular to journalists from minority communities."

The independence of the media is essential to inform the public and generate debate on important and controversial issues, including race. A free media can play a role by providing information to the public about human rights and reporting on violations. It is essential that the media be engaged in the process of reporting such issues without compromising their independence and that they be given full protection in their work. It is important that Governments endeavour to create a climate for good professional journalism in their countries.

The Internet

Racist elements can use the media to promote their ideas. Internet websites, for example, can be used to disseminate racist and xenophobic material and incite racial hatred, which can be a contemporary form of racism.

During the World Conference, the international community will likely address the issue of harmful and hateful content in telecommunications, taking account of



Media

freedom of opinion and expression and access to information, as guaranteed by the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In countries where there is access, the Internet also presents enormous potential to combat racism and intolerance. The UN Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights on the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Abid Hussain, has stated that the "Internet is also one of the most effective tools to combat intolerance by opening the gateway to messages of mutual respect, enabling them to circulate freely worldwide, and by encouraging collective actions to oppose and bring to an end such phenomena as hate speech [and] racism..."

Media for human rights

The media have greater potential to serve as preventive tools against racism and for the promotion and protection of human rights. They can help build a culture of human rights by reporting on issues of tolerance between various racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups and by exposing human rights violations wherever and whenever they occur. Media for human rights can mean the dissemination of information that combats intolerance, racism and propaganda. The media can also give a vulnerable and voiceless community a sense of empowerment. A good example is a community radio station such as the UNESCO-supported Radio Ada in Ghana. Since 1999, this station has been broadcasting in Dangme (the local language) and its mission is to support the development aspirations of the Dangme people, give a voice to the voiceless, and sustain their culture. All the programmes are produced locally and presented by trained volunteers from the community. Media can provide an opportunity to reflect the imagery and diversity of different groups and cultures. It is also a medium to challenge perceptions and prejudices, as illustrated by the popular anti-racism advertising campaign of the Commission for Racial Equality in the United Kingdom. (See the full story on page 12)



Reporting from a camp in Kibeeo, Rwanda. Photo courtesy of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The media can also be a way to educate, and to correct distorted images about groups and history. The educative and informative role of media is essential to the fight against racism. The OHCHR has been looking at the role of the media in promoting human rights and non-discrimination. In addition to the 1998 Seminar on the Role of Media in Protecting Minorities, last December, the Office organized a second workshop on indigenous media at UN headquarters. It focused on ways to strengthen indigenous peoples' own media and the need to gain better access to global media which increasingly dominates the content and policy of the written press and television. The participants called on the World Conference to organize a symposium on the role of the media in combating discrimination against indigenous peoples as a follow up to the Conference, and also suggested that indigenous journalists and film-makers be invited to Durban to file stories for use worldwide. Very recently, the Inter-Governmental Regional Conference of the Americas held in Chile recognized the important role that the media, along with Governments, local authorities and NGOs can play in building confidence between different racial and ethnic groups.

Media representatives can help make a difference in the fight against racism. In preparation for the World Conference against Racism, the media can:

- help increase awareness about the World Conference and its goals, and maintain a focus on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance after the Conference;
- integrate different peoples, perspectives and voices in their work;
- support local, national and international campaigns against racism;
- consider specific education and training for journalists, reporters and editors which take into account issues of race and gender;
- look into "codes of conduct" for reporting and improve newsroom performance when dealing with issues of racism and intolerance;
- dedicate coverage to anti-racist and human rights education; and,
- use the Conference to reflect on how media can better respond to the challenge of anti-racism.

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Voices against Racism

"I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination indeed, everything and anything except me."

Ralph Ellison,
The Invisible Man
Random House
(New York), 1965(1952)



Photo courtesy of Dean Freeman.

Scary Spice Mel B...

The advertisement opens with a black background and a subtle but imposing modern musical score, then a familiar celebrity appears. As the instantly recognizable Spice Girl Mel B morphs from black to white woman, Scary Spice asks, "Would I be less scary?" World heavyweight boxing champion Lennox Lewis changes from a black man to a white man before our eyes and asks, "Would you think differently about me if I were white?"

This is the essence of the hugely successful "WouldI?" advertising campaign that has been broadcast on television, before feature movies at the cinema and courtesy of some open-minded football clubs during game intermissions across the United Kingdom.

The idea was simple. Armed with a small budget of \$US300,000, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), which is the specialized government agency charged by parliament to improve race relations in the UK, opened a tendering process in which advertising agencies pitched ideas for a new advertising campaign against racism. Euro RSCG Wnek Gosper, a UK advertising agency that is part of a worldwide network and has a roster of blue-chip clients, won the account.

Partner Mark Wnek says Euro's idea was to show "well-known faces as they've never been seen before. We wanted to put a positive slant on the whole racial issue and do a celebration of diversity in the UK, to show that success in the nation should not in any way be linked to colour."

Nine well-known personalities, including the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and footballer Andy Cole, donated their time and sat for hours of make-up and filming.

Following its launch at Downing Street, the campaign received massive print coverage, and inspired numerous talk shows, panel discussions and radio call-ins. It has been well-received

An Innovative Media Partnership against Racism

by ethnic minority newspapers and magazines. "WouldI?" is the most written about television advertisement in UK history. The ad has also been nominated for several media awards. Everyone is talking about it and a lot of people are talking about racism.

Will dramatic advertising change deeply held beliefs and prejudices?

The hard sell is to challenge people's perceptions in order to change their minds. "It's in your face, yet not alienating," says Chris Mayant, a press officer at the CRE. He believes "the campaign has a certain resonance for people as it has reached every age group, all social classes, and various ethnic groups."

The "WouldI?" campaign, as Mayant calls it, "is partnership in the right tone." It is a creative and practical initiative that fosters dialogue about racism. It is an example of a public-private partnership for a common good.

The CRE paid the minimal up-front production expenses, Euro and others donated their services and digital post-production costs. Euro got the credit and a lot of goodwill, but much more than that. Jamie Elliott, who worked on the campaign for Euro says, "it is a significant piece of communication for humans and about humanity – a message in which the company really believes."

The campaign also demonstrates the awesome power of the media and the impact of celebrity. But, will dramatic advertising change deeply held beliefs and prejudices? A recent British crime survey found that "every day in Britain there are four incidents of racial harassment or abuse every hour." Advertisement will not end racism and racial discrimination, but it can challenge people's perspectives and stereotypes about people from different racial, religious or ethnic groups.



Photo courtesy of the CRE.

...would she be less scary?

For more information about the CRE and the "WouldI?" campaign, go to www.cre.gov.uk

For information about Euro RSCG Wnek Gosper, go to www.eurorscg.co.uk

Durban 2001 United against Racism

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