

**20<sup>TH</sup> COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE (DURBAN +20)**

**“DURBAN+20: REFLECTIONS ON YOUTH AND RACISM TWENTY YEARS LATER”**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**Date and venue:** **Friday, 30 July 2021, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. University of Johannesburg and Microsoft Teams online platform**

*(will be broadcast live on Ubuntu Radio)*

**Objectives:** The panel discussion aims to reflect on the contemporary challenges facing young people nationally and globally, but most importantly, on how young people can be agents of change against the backdrop of the 20<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) as well as the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1976 Soweto Youth uprising against the racist apartheid system. In this regard, the meeting will also seek to reignite the minds of young people with the spirit of the “Mandela-Robinson” pledge, *Tolerance and Diversity: A Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*<sup>1</sup>, which was adopted by delegates at the Durban Conference to demonstrate their steadfast commitment to combat the scourge of racism, racial discrimination and their contemporary manifestations.

**Moderator:**

- **Mr Abbey Makoe**, Veteran Journalist and International Relations Commentator, South Africa.

**Opening statements:**

- **Dr Naledi Mandisa Pandor**, South Africa’s Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (Keynote address).
- **Ms Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- **Ms Tendayi Achiume**, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

**Panelists:**

- **Ms Abigail Noko**, Regional Representative, Office UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- **Ms Fatima Chohan**, Deputy Chairperson, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).
- **Ms Malaika Mahlatsi**, Pen and Azanian Revolution.
- **Professor Adekeye Adebajo**, Director: Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg.

**Vote of thanks:**

- **Ambassador N Mxakato-Diseko**: Deputy Director General: Global Governance & Continental Agenda, Department of International Relations and Cooperation
- **Professor T Marwala**: Vice-Chancellor, University of Johannesburg

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/vision.htm>

**Outcome:**

The expected outcomes of the discussion are:

- To provide an opportunity and platform for young people to engage with global issues, in this case, the fight against racism so that they (young people) can appreciate how these issues impact on their day-to-day lives (“globalization” of international politics);
- Increased understanding of achievements and challenges in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
- Reflection on the impact of the legacy of apartheid racism and its contemporary manifestation on young people;
- To demonstrate the central importance of combating the scourge of racism, racial discrimination and their contemporary manifestations as contained in the pledge **“Tolerance and Diversity: A Vision for the 21st Century”**<sup>2</sup> ;
- To commemorate the 20 years since the Durban Conference and the Programme of Action and build the momentum towards the main celebration to be held at UNGA76 in September, in New York;
- Enhanced collaboration with multiple stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, students and youth organisations in the efforts to raise awareness and combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and
- Renewed commitment to (a) combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and (b) foster the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels.

**Mandate:**

In [Resolution 75/237](#), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) decided, in the context of the anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to hold a one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth year of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (Durban+20), at the level of Heads of State and Government, on the second day of the general debate of the seventy-sixth session, on the theme **“Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent”**. That meeting will consist of an opening plenary meeting, consecutive round tables and/or thematic panels and a closing plenary meeting. The meeting will culminate in the adoption of “a short and concise political declaration aimed at mobilizing political will at the national, regional and international levels for the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and its follow-up processes”. The General Assembly further invited Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organisations, civil society, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to organise and support various high-visibility initiatives, aimed at effectively increasing awareness at all levels, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

**Format:**

The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. After opening statements and initial presentations by the panelists, there will be two segments of interventions, followed by conclusions from the panelists. The discussion will be organised in a virtual

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/vision.htm>

“townhall meeting” style (where some presentations may/would be in the form of pre-recorded video messages).

A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover opening statements, panellists’ presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions online. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panelists questions.

## 1. BACKGROUND

On the eve of the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), held in South Africa, Durban, in September 2001, (late) President Nelson Mandela and the former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Mary Robinson posed the following questions to conference delegates in their pledge against all forms of racism;

**“As a new century begins, we believe each society needs to ask itself certain questions. Is it sufficiently inclusive? Is it non-discriminatory? Are its norms of behavior based on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?”<sup>3</sup>**

Furthermore, the pledge expressed strong desire that

**“Over the coming year we pledge ourselves to seek that conversion of mind and heart. What we envisage for every man, woman and child is a life where the exercise of individual gifts and personal rights is affirmed by the dynamic solidarity of our membership of the one human family.”<sup>4</sup>**

Subsequently, the conference adopted wide-ranging programmatic measures symbolised by paragraph 216 of the programme emphasising youth involvement in the efforts to eradicate racism at the national, regional and international levels wherein the Programme of Action

**“Urges States to encourage the full and active participation of, as well as involve more closely, youth in the elaboration, planning and implementation of activities to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and calls upon States, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and other sectors of society, to facilitate both national and 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;”<sup>5</sup>**

## 2. CONTEXT

The 20<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) coincide with the 45<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the 1976 Soweto Youth uprising against

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/vision.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/vision.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/vision.htm>

the racist apartheid system. Although the black youth played an important mobilizing role in the struggle against apartheid, they remain in the margins of the post-apartheid democratic society and feel largely left behind in the development of policies, initiatives and decisions that will impact their future lives.

According to Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 1st Quarter 2021, the official rate of unemployment amongst the youth age between 15-35 has reached 46.3% whilst amongst the ages of 15-24 unemployment rate is over 63%. This implies that despite the commitment in the preamble to the Constitution South Africa to not only recognise the “injustices” of the past but to build a united and inclusive society, the legacy of apartheid continues to haunt and trouble the democratic society, particularly the vulnerable sections of young people.

In light of these worrying trends, societal perceptions turn to portray young people negatively. Hannah J. Dawson, Senior Researcher, Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, in her critique of media perception of young people in South Africa, argues, correctly so that stereotypes and images that portray jobless young people “as a ‘ticking time bomb’ that poses a threat to a country’s stability” are unhelpful and constitute a failure to understand the creativity of the youth and nature of the challenges they face daily.

### 3. THE RATIONALE FOR THE EVENT

The virtual Town Hall event to be addressed by Deputy Minister Alvin Botes will not only be part of South Africa’s national programme to commemorate 20 years of the WCAR and the DDPA, but a moment of debate and reflection on the contemporary challenges facing young people nationally and globally. South Africa, on behalf of the African Group both in Geneva and New York, has been given the responsibility of leading UN efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation of the DDPA as the only comprehensive UN outcomes document aimed at combating the scourge of racism and racial discrimination, including their contemporary manifestations. As part of the legacy of the 2001 WCAR, including the Nelson Mandela and Mary Robinson pledge to conference delegates, South African society must continue to question itself, especially in relation to the future generation.

### 4. OBJECTIVES

- a. To create a platform for reflection on the impact of the legacy of apartheid racism and racism around the world and their contemporary manifestation on young people, not only in South Africa but around the world.
- b. To not only bring to life the weight of the message contained in the pledge “**Tolerance and Diversity: A Vision for the 21st Century**”<sup>6</sup> but to demonstrate the relevance thereof in confronting contemporary racism now and in the future.
- c. To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Durban Conference and the Programme of Action and build the momentum towards the main celebration to be held in September, in New York.
- d. To enable multiple stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, students and youth organisations to exchange knowledge and experiences.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/vision.htm>

- e. To remind the society in general of the importance of the Durban Conference and the Programme of Action and its relevance in confronting modern day racism.
- f. To allow some degree of intergenerational dialogue on the impact of racism on young people.

## **5. AREAS OF DISCUSSION**

- a. The relevance of the Durban Conference and the Programme of Action in confronting contemporary racism locally and globally.
- b. The significance of the marking of the 20th Commemoration of the Durban Conference and the Programme of Action.
- c. How to leverage and utilise the Mandela & Robinson vision of the new century based on the values and principles contained in Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- d. Youth experiences of marginalisation, exclusion and racial discrimination and how to empower them to become change agents.

## **6. PARTICIPATION**

- a. The participation at the event will be extended to government departments, Chapter nine institutions, civil society organisations, academic institutions, youth formations and guest speakers from UN entities.

## **7. OUTCOMES**

- a. Based on the panel discussions, Deputy Minister Botes' main address, guest speakers and contributions of the participants, it is envisaged that the event will produce a compilation of the content of the discussion and recommendations for distribution amongst the stakeholders.
- b. Online conference data base will be created to ensure access for participants and non-participants for future use.