Geneva International Centre for Justice

63rd Session of the Human Rights Council

BEHIND THE BADGE: SYSTEMIC RACISM AGAINST AFRICANS PERSISTS



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I. Executive Summary

On 29 September 2026, during its 63rd session, the Human Rights Council held an Enhanced Interactive Dialogue under Item 9 with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement (EMLER). The discussion examined persistent systemic racism affecting Africans and people of African descent, with particular attention to law enforcement, criminal justice and the enforcement of drug laws and policies.

The reports before the Council demonstrated that racial discrimination remains embedded across different stages of the criminal justice system, including police stops, searches, arrests, use of force, detention and sentencing. Particular concern was expressed over racial profiling, excessive use of force, over-policing and disproportionate incarceration. The growing use of artificial intelligence, predictive policing and biometric technologies also raised concerns that historically biased data may reproduce or amplify existing racial inequalities.

A central theme of the dialogue was the relationship between drug-control policies and racial inequality. EMLER characterised discrimination in drug-law enforcement as systemic rather than incidental and linked present disparities to historical and structural factors, including colonialism, enslavement, the racialisation of drugs and punitive approaches associated with the "war on drugs." The Mechanism therefore called for a shift away from predominantly punitive and militarised responses towards approaches grounded in human rights, racial justice, public health, accountability and meaningful community participation.

The Mechanism's May 2026 visit to Colombia provided a concrete illustration of these concerns. While recognising Colombia's efforts to address structural racism and its move towards a more human rights-based national drug policy, EMLER reported concerns relating to racial profiling, discriminatory police checks, excessive use of force, barriers to accountability and the effects of punitive and militarised drug-control measures on Afro-Colombian communities. The discussion also highlighted the importance of rural development and environmental protection when addressing illicit crop cultivation, rather than relying predominantly on criminal-law and security responses.

States, international organisations and civil society broadly emphasised the need to move from isolated responses to structural and preventive reform. Contributions highlighted independent oversight, disaggregated racial and ethnic data, accountability for excessive force, alternatives to incarceration, human-rights training, community participation and greater investment in education, healthcare and other social protections. Civil society interventions additionally drew attention to the lived consequences of discriminatory policing and called for effective investigations, remedies and protection from forced displacement and other abuses.

The dialogue nevertheless revealed an important challenge: the existence of laws, strategies and institutional commitments does not necessarily demonstrate improvement in the everyday experiences of affected communities.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) therefore welcomes the positive initiatives presented during the dialogue while stressing the need to close the gap between policy commitments and measurable outcomes. **GICJ** recommends placing prevention and measurable accountability at the centre of the next phase of racial-justice reform. This includes racial-justice impact assessments before major policing, surveillance and drug-control measures are introduced; measurable indicators covering stops, searches, arrests, force, detention and sentencing; stronger independent civilian oversight; examination of institutional rather than solely individual responsibility; meaningful participation of affected communities; and human-rights and racial-bias assessments of AI and surveillance technologies. States should also establish systematic follow-up mechanisms capable of demonstrating whether implementation of international recommendations is actually reducing racial disparities.

Ultimately, the dialogue underscored that progress should not be measured simply by the number of policies adopted, but by whether those policies change lived realities and reduce inequality. The essential questions remain: Who bears the burden of enforcement? Who benefits from the policy? And is the policy reducing or reproducing inequality?

II. Background

International efforts against racism rest on two pillars: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism. In 2026, the international community marks the 25th anniversary of the DDPA, providing an important opportunity to reflect on progress made and the challenges that persist in combating racism and racial discrimination. The DDPA goes further than prohibiting discrimination: it confronts the historical and structural roots of racism, including enslavement and colonialism. Within the Human Rights Council, these commitments are pursued under Agenda Item 9: "Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action".

The killing of George Floyd in May 2020 and the global protests that followed brought racism in law enforcement into sharp focus. In response, the Council adopted resolution 47/21, establishing the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement (EMLER), composed of three experts with law enforcement and human rights expertise. By resolution 56/13, the Council renewed the mandate until its 66th session under the same terms of reference. Both resolutions request the High Commissioner and EMLER each to prepare an annual report and to present them jointly in an enhanced interactive dialogue that prioritises the participation of directly affected individuals and communities, including victims and their families.

REPORTS BEFORE THE COUNCIL

The enhanced interactive dialogue, held on 29 September 2026, considered:

Document No.	Report	Focus
A/HRC/63/69	High Commissioner: "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"	Progress and persistent obstacles to transformative change for racial justice and equality, including excessive use of force by law enforcement
A/HRC/63/72	EMLER fifth annual report: "Systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent in the enforcement of drug laws and policies"	The colonial and structural roots of drug control, and discrimination at every stage of criminal justice, from police stops to sentencing and detention
A/HRC/63/72/Add.1	EMLER: "Visit to Colombia" (May 2026)	Racial profiling, criminalisation, and the impact of punitive and militarised security and drug-control measures on Afro-Colombian communities
A/HRC/63/72/Add.2	Comments by Colombia on the visit report	The Government's response to EMLER's findings

The dialogue formed part of the Council's wider work under Item 9, alongside the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Group of Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the DDPA, and efforts to strengthen international standards against racial discrimination. Together, these mechanisms reflect the Council's continuing efforts to translate international commitments into meaningful protection against racism and discrimination.

The panel comprised:

- Ms. Awa Dabo, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Ms. Tracie Keesee, Chair of EMLER
- Mr. Angelo Camufingo, civil society representative and policy adviser on racism and institutional change in Europe
- Ms. Maryluz Barragán González, civil society representative and Deputy Director of Dejusticia (Center for Law, Justice and Society), Colombia

III. Summary of Expert Reports

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/63/69)

The High Commissioner's report A/HRC/63/69 examined progress towards racial justice and equality for Africans and people of African descent between April 2025 and June 2026. Despite some positive developments, the report found that systemic racism continued to affect many areas of life, including education, employment, housing, healthcare, access to land, social protection and justice. A major concern was the lack of adequate data disaggregated by race or ethnicity, which made patterns of discrimination more difficult to identify and address.

Particular concern was raised regarding law enforcement and criminal justice, including racial profiling, excessive use of force, overrepresentation in detention and continuing obstacles to accountability and effective remedies. The report also drew attention to the increasing use of artificial intelligence and emerging policing technologies, including automated decision-making, predictive analytics and biometric recognition, warning that such technologies could reproduce existing racial biases and disproportionately affect people of African descent.

The report further warned of setbacks in racial equality, including the weakening of some equality and diversity initiatives, racist rhetoric and restrictions affecting civil society and those speaking against racial injustice. While recognising positive measures adopted by some States, the High Commissioner stressed that existing efforts remained insufficient to achieve lasting structural change.

Recommendations of the High Commissioner

The High Commissioner called for action in four main areas: dismantling systemic racism; ending impunity for human rights violations by law enforcement officials; ensuring the meaningful participation of people of African descent; and confronting the legacies of enslavement and colonialism through accountability and redressal measures.

States were encouraged to strengthen national measures against racial discrimination, improve the collection and use of disaggregated data, ensure effective accountability and remedies for violations, and create safe and meaningful opportunities for affected communities to participate in decisions concerning them.

The High Commissioner ultimately called for a significant paradigm shift and sustained investment in racial justice and equality, stressing the need to move beyond isolated measures towards long-term structural and institutional change.

Report of the International Independent Expert Mechanism (A/HRC/63/72)

In its fifth annual report, A/HRC/63/72, the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement examined systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent in the enforcement of drug laws and policies. It found that racial discrimination in drug enforcement is rooted in historical and structural factors, including colonialism, enslavement, the racialisation of drugs and punitive approaches associated with the “war on drugs”.

The report highlighted racial disparities throughout the criminal justice process, from police stops, searches and arrests to prosecution, sentencing and detention. Particular concerns included racial profiling, over-policing, excessive use of force and the disproportionate incarceration of Africans and people of African descent.

The Mechanism further highlighted intersecting forms of discrimination affecting women and girls, children and young people, migrants and persons living in poverty. Women of African descent may be particularly affected by the criminalisation of low-level and non-violent drug-related activities linked to poverty, economic vulnerability or coercive circumstances.

The report also identified the lack of data disaggregated by race or ethnicity as an obstacle to identifying discriminatory patterns and ensuring accountability. It warned that predictive policing and algorithmic decision-making systems may reproduce or amplify existing racial biases when they rely on historically biased crime data.

Recommendations of the Expert Mechanism

The Mechanism called for a shift away from punitive, militarised and enforcement-driven drug policies towards approaches grounded in human rights, racial justice, public health and community participation.

It recommended reviewing drug laws and policies for their racial impact, prohibiting racial profiling, strengthening independent oversight and accountability, and improving the collection and publication of disaggregated data.

The Mechanism also recommended expanding alternatives to incarceration and community-based responses, strengthening harm-reduction measures, and decriminalising drug use and possession for personal use in accordance with international human rights law. It further stressed that Africans and people of African descent, particularly affected communities, should meaningfully participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of drug policies.

Expert Mechanism's Visit to Colombia (A/HRC/63/72/Add.1)

In its report A/HRC/63/72/Add.1, the International Independent Expert Mechanism presented the findings of its visit to Colombia from 4 to 14 May 2026. The visit examined the challenges and good practices in addressing systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent, particularly in the context of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

The Mechanism recognised Colombia's efforts to acknowledge structural racism and noted several positive initiatives. However, it found that deep-rooted racial inequalities remain visible in interactions with law enforcement. It received accounts of racial profiling, discriminatory police checks and disproportionate use of force against people of African descent, particularly young people. In rural areas, Afro-Colombian communities were also affected by violence, insecurity and the limited presence of State institutions.

Particular concern was raised over racial profiling and the unnecessary or excessive use of force. The Mechanism also identified barriers to justice and accountability, including mistrust of institutions and fear of reprisals. Poor conditions and prolonged detention in temporary detention centres were another concern, while the lack of race-disaggregated data made it difficult to determine the extent to which people of African descent were disproportionately affected.

The report further examined Colombia's drug-control policies. It noted the historical impact of punitive and militarised approaches on Afro-Colombian communities and raised concerns about racial profiling and the effects of counter-narcotics measures. At the same time, the Mechanism welcomed the National Drug Policy 2023–2033 and its move towards a human rights-based approach, while stressing the importance of incorporating racial and ethnic perspectives and meaningful community participation in its implementation.

Recommendations of the Expert Mechanism

The Mechanism called on Colombia to adopt a comprehensive human rights-based approach to systemic racism and to strengthen the participation and representation of people of African descent within public institutions and decision-making processes. It also recommended collecting and publishing data disaggregated by race or ethnic origin to better identify discriminatory patterns.

Among its law-enforcement recommendations, the Mechanism called for the explicit prohibition of racial profiling, stronger independent oversight, accountability for excessive use of force and continued human rights training for police and justice officials. It also recommended transferring the National Police from the Ministry of Defence to a civilian ministry and reviewing practices such as citation notices, police quotas and "transfers for protective purposes".

The Mechanism further called for improved conditions in temporary detention centres, stronger protection for Afro-descendant human rights defenders and communities affected by armed groups, and measures to ensure continuity of the mandate previously exercised by the Ministry of Equality and Equity following its closure.

IV. Exhaustive Summary of the Enhanced Interactive Dialogue

1. Statements by the Panellists

Ms. Awa Dabo, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights



Ms. **Awa Dabo, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**, opened the dialogue by reflecting on the five years since the killing of George Floyd sparked a global movement for racial justice. She warned that the current environment is marked by rising overt racism, the weakening of institutional safeguards, rollbacks of diversity and inclusion policies, increasing hate crimes and restrictions on civic space.

Referring to the High Commissioner's latest report, based on 34 submissions, she highlighted the continuing impact of systemic racism on housing, education, employment, healthcare, land, social protection and justice. She stressed that women and children, migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities and other minorities of African descent may face compounded forms of discrimination.

In law enforcement and criminal justice, Ms. Dabo highlighted racial profiling, disproportionate use of force, overrepresentation in detention and gaps in racial and ethnic data. She also raised

concerns about attacks, detention and surveillance affecting human rights defenders and journalists working on racial justice.

While acknowledging some positive initiatives, she stressed that existing efforts were insufficient. She called for a paradigm shift towards sustained political and financial investment in racial justice, including national action plans, disaggregated data, meaningful participation of people of African descent, stronger accountability and reparatory justice for the legacies of enslavement and colonialism. She concluded by calling for greater solidarity against racial hate speech and disinformation and renewed action during the Second International Decade for People of African Descent.

Chair of the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement



Ms. Tracie Keesee, Chair of the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement, presented the Mechanism's work over the past year and its findings on systemic racism in drug-law enforcement.

She stressed that racial discrimination in drug policy enforcement is systemic rather than incidental, linking current disparities to colonialism, enslavement, the racialisation of drugs and militarised drug-control policies. She highlighted persistent racial profiling, over-policing, excessive use of force and unequal criminal justice outcomes affecting Africans and people of African descent.

Ms. Keesee called for a fundamental shift from punitive and militarised approaches towards racial justice, human rights and public health, supported by stronger accountability, alternatives to detention, disaggregated data, community participation and redressal measures.

In Colombia, she acknowledged serious security challenges but stressed that responses to violence and drug trafficking must comply with international human rights law and must not reproduce racial profiling, exclusion or criminalisation. She noted Colombia's recognition of systemic racism and encouraged implementation of the Mechanism's recommendations.

The European Coalition of Cities Against Racism



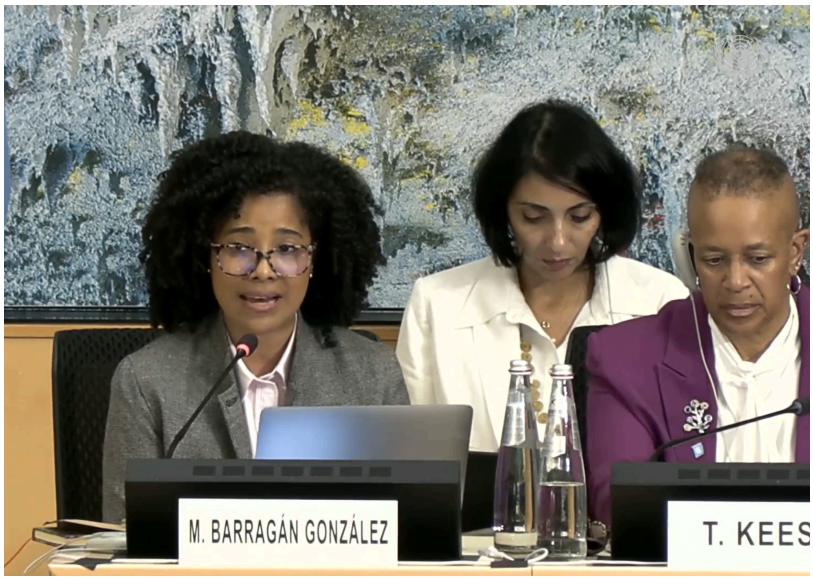
Mr. Angelo Camufingo, Policy & Advocacy Advisor at the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR), stressed that anti-Black racism in law enforcement is not a series of isolated incidents or individual misconduct, but a manifestation of systemic racism rooted in historical and structural inequalities.

Drawing on the European context, he explained that racialised assumptions can expose Black people to greater surveillance and criminalisation, while poverty, social exclusion and precarious living and working conditions can further increase exposure to State control. He stressed that neither Black identity nor migration produces criminality; rather, marginalisation and criminalisation can reinforce one another.

Mr. Camufingo also highlighted the importance of local institutions, where rights are experienced through policing, education, healthcare and other public services. He warned against narratives associating Blackness with migration, crime or insecurity, noting their potential influence on institutional decision-making.

He called for structural rather than reactive change, including action plans, equality data, independent oversight, meaningful participation of Black communities, equal access to public services and sustained investment in affected communities. He concluded that addressing anti-Black racism must be preventive, responsive and reparative.

Center for Law, Justice and Society in Colombia



Ms. Maryluz Barragán González, Deputy Director of Dejusticia – Center for Law, Justice and Society in Colombia, addressed the intersection of drug policy and racial discrimination in the Americas. She argued that drug-control policies do not distribute their burdens and benefits equally: the costs of enforcement are often borne by particular communities and territories, while the benefits are realised elsewhere. In Colombia, she linked this imbalance to international pressure to eradicate illicit crops in response to cocaine markets located outside the country.

Focusing on rural Colombia, she highlighted the impact of crop-eradication measures on Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent, particularly concerns surrounding aerial spraying with chemical herbicides and its potential consequences for health, the environment and

livelihoods. She stressed that “cultivation of” illicit crops should not be approached solely through criminal law and security measures, but also as an issue of rural development and human rights.

Ms. Barragán González also cautioned against treating drug trafficking in the same manner as armed hostilities, warning that expanded military and counter-terrorism approaches could increase the risk of excessive force and weaken procedural safeguards, particularly for marginalised communities.

She called for racially and ethnically disaggregated data on communities affected by drug-control policies and urged that alternatives to incarceration and other emerging approaches incorporate racial and ethnic perspectives. She also asked the Expert Mechanism to consider developments in Colombia since its May 2026 visit, while stressing that all drug-control measures should remain grounded in human rights guarantees.

2. Statement by the Concerned Country

The Republic of Colombia



The Representative of the Republic of Colombia explained that one of the first tasks of the Government that took office in August 2026 was to prepare a response to the Expert Mechanism's visit report, which was transmitted to the Mechanism on 19 September 2026. The response acknowledged continuing challenges while reaffirming the new Government's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, racial equality, the fight against all forms of discrimination, and the rights of people of African descent and other ethnic communities.

At the same time, Colombia stressed the State's sovereign responsibility and obligation to protect its population from armed and criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking, extortion, abduction, illegal mining, smuggling and other illicit economies. These threats also affect Afro-descendant communities, and the delegation argued that the effective protection of their rights requires professional security institutions capable of ensuring the presence and authority of the State while fully respecting human rights. It emphasised that "security and human rights are not opposing objectives" and stated that measures addressing illicit economies and transnational threats must operate within the Constitution, the law and the rule of law.

Responding specifically to the Expert Mechanism's findings, Colombia noted that its visit had taken place in May 2026, before the current Government assumed office in August. The delegation expressed concern that some assessments in the report appeared to address

announcements of policies and measures by the new Government on the basis of circumstances examined before it took office. Colombia therefore called for a clear distinction between documented findings, concerns that are preventive in nature, and assessments of policies that have actually been implemented. It maintained that such assessments should be based on verifiable evidence and concrete outcomes.

The delegation acknowledged that manifestations of racism and racial discrimination persist, including within law enforcement, and require a sustained State response. Nevertheless, it stressed that security policies are not inherently incompatible with racial equality or international human rights obligations. Colombia highlighted progress by the National Police towards a human rights-based approach, referring in particular to the establishment of the Center for Standards of the National Police, the Integrated Human Rights System, and a specialised unit for dialogue and law enforcement in the context of public demonstrations and social protest, designed to protect the exercise of the rights to assembly and demonstration.

Colombia reaffirmed its rejection of discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin and stressed that National Police action must be governed by the principles of equality, human dignity, non-discrimination and respect for human rights. Accordingly, the delegation argued that any new security policy, institutional capacity or operation should be assessed according to its legal framework, institutional safeguards, effective implementation and actual outcomes, rather than assumptions concerning its potential effects.

Turning to temporary detention centres, Colombia acknowledged existing structural challenges while emphasising that such centres are intended, in principle, to be exceptional and temporary. The delegation requested additional information regarding situations, reports or individual cases referred to in the Expert Mechanism's report so that they could be identified, analysed and compared with available institutional records, allowing the authorities to adopt appropriate measures where necessary. Colombia further stated that it would examine the Mechanism's recommendations in accordance with its constitutional system, institutional competencies and the specific circumstances of the country.

In conclusion, Colombia reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating all forms of racial discrimination, strengthening institutional accountability, ensuring effective human rights

protection and building trust between public institutions and communities historically affected by racism and exclusion. It pledged to continue fulfilling its international human rights obligations and engaging constructively with universal human rights mechanisms, while simultaneously exercising the State's responsibility to protect the population from armed groups, drug trafficking and criminal organisations threatening their rights, security and freedom.

3. Statements on behalf of Group of States

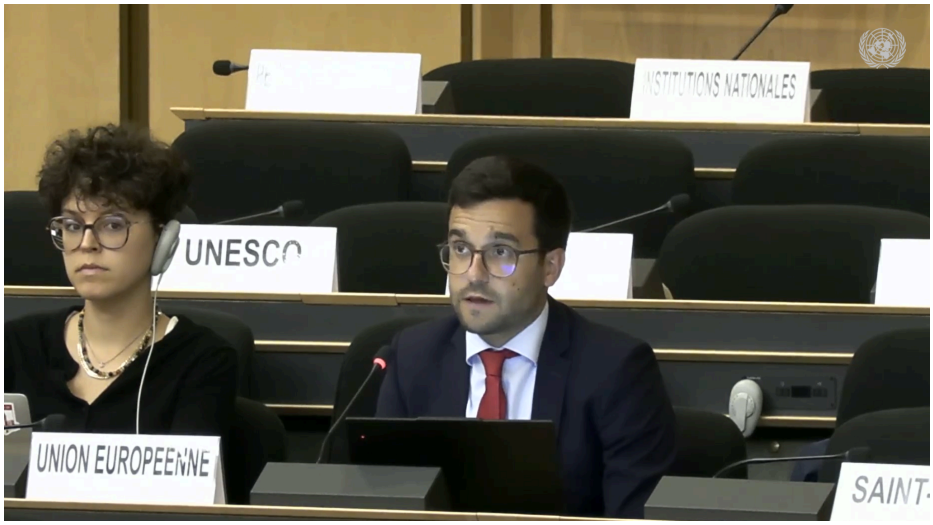
The Kingdom of Norway on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Countries



The Representative of the Kingdom of Norway, speaking on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries, expressed concern that structural inequalities and discrimination in law enforcement continue to affect people of African descent, including within their own societies.

He called for a systemic approach to racial justice, welcoming stronger legal and enforcement frameworks while emphasising the importance of public-health and harm-reduction approaches. He further asked which measures could most effectively translate commitments to racial justice into tangible improvements in the lives of people of African descent.

The European Union



The Representative of the European Union (EU) also welcomed the reports and stressed that law enforcement and drug policies should be grounded in human rights, non-discrimination and effective oversight.

The EU highlighted its Anti-Racism Strategy, including measures to prevent racial profiling, strengthen anti-discrimination law, improve equality data and ensure meaningful participation of people of African descent. It asked which policing reforms are most effective in preventing racial profiling and incorporating an intersectional gender perspective.

The Republic of Kenya on behalf of the African Group



The Representative of the Republic of Kenya, speaking on behalf of the African Group, expressed concern that punitive drug-control policies disproportionately affect Africans and people of African descent due to entrenched racial discrimination in law, policy and practice.

The Group stressed that systemic racism can operate throughout the criminal justice process and called on States to address underlying factors including poverty, inequality, exclusion, limited access to services and historical marginalisation.

4. Relevant statements by other Delegations

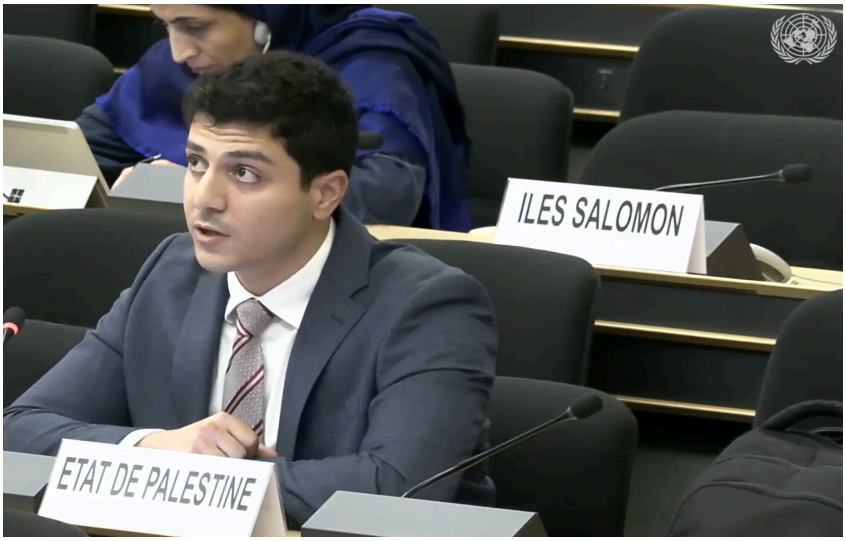
The Republic of South Africa



The Representative of the Republic of South Africa highlighted the links between systemic racism, drug policy and law enforcement, including the compounded effects of racial and gender discrimination.

South Africa emphasised that drug policy must address underlying poverty and inequality. Referring to its National Drug Master Plan, the delegation supported a human rights-based shift from punishment to care, including equitable access to health services for people who use drugs, including those in correctional facilities.

The State of Palestine



The Representative of the State of Palestine expressed solidarity with Africans and people of African descent and emphasised that racism can be reproduced through institutions, laws, policing, exclusion and impunity, requiring accountability and reparatory justice.

Drawing parallels with the Palestinian experience, the delegation argued that racial discrimination, dehumanising rhetoric and colonial legacies can contribute to wider patterns of exclusion and rights violations. It linked the Palestinian struggle with the broader global struggle against racism, racial hierarchy and dehumanisation.

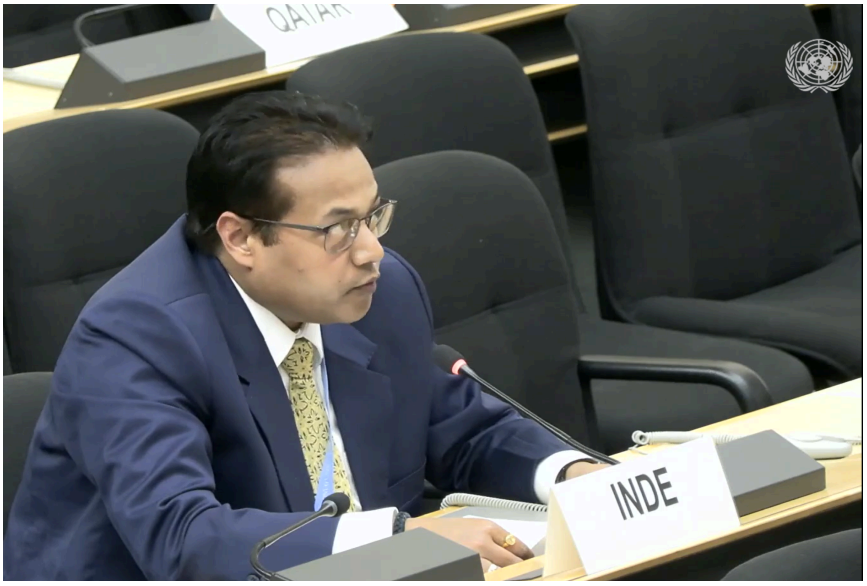
The Federative Republic of Brazil



The Representative of the Federative Republic of Brazil described racial discrimination in drug-law enforcement as a manifestation of systemic and structural racism that disproportionately affects people of African descent.

Brazil highlighted national initiatives aimed at reducing violence and protecting Black and marginalised youth, while supporting stronger integration of racial equality across public policy. The delegation also emphasised reparatory justice, arguing that responses to historical exclusion must address continuing harms and enable Black youth to live with dignity, access education, move safely and participate meaningfully in decision-making.

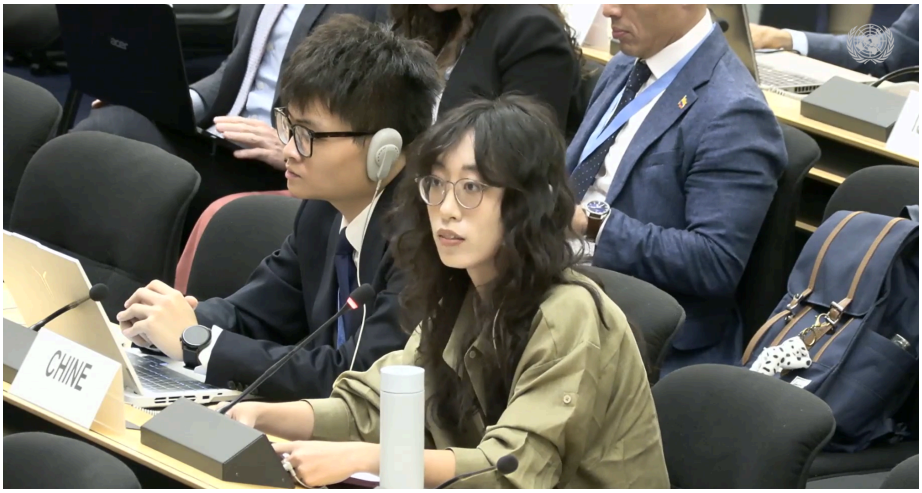
The Republic of India



The Representative of the Republic of India stressed that law-enforcement responses to drug-related offences must be non-discriminatory, evidence-based and firmly grounded in due process and the rule of law.

India reaffirmed its commitment to equality, human dignity and non-discrimination, noting constitutional protections against racial discrimination. The delegation also supported nationally led and internationally coordinated efforts towards the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, particularly on its 25th anniversary.

The People's Republic of China



The Representative of the People's Republic of China took note of the reports of the High Commissioner and the Expert Mechanism and expressed concern over systemic racism affecting Africans and people of African descent in the enforcement of drug laws and policies. The delegation alleged that racial, ethnic and religious minorities, including people of African descent, Asians, Muslims and Indigenous Peoples, continue to face discriminatory treatment in law enforcement in several countries, including unreasonable searches, excessive sentencing and violence in detention.

China further criticised what it characterised as colonial and hegemonic approaches and the selective use of human rights criticism to divert attention from domestic human rights concerns. It urged the countries concerned to review discriminatory laws, policies and practices, reform law-enforcement and judicial systems, investigate alleged violence, ensure accountability and provide reparations to victims.

The Republic of Cuba



The Representative of the Republic of Cuba expressed concern over the rise of racist and discriminatory rhetoric, particularly in developed countries, and the weakening of legislative frameworks protecting diversity, equity and inclusion. Reaffirming its opposition to all forms of racism and racial discrimination, Cuba stressed States' obligations to eliminate discrimination against Africans and people of African descent.

The delegation highlighted Cuba's constitutional recognition of human dignity, its implementation of the vast majority of recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and its co-sponsorship of four African Group resolutions under Agenda Item 9. At the same time, it acknowledged the need to strengthen national statistical and information systems and further improve anti-discrimination policies.

Cuba supported the High Commissioner's call for global reform to address historical exclusion and advocated for the adoption of a United Nations declaration on the full respect for the human rights of people of African descent.

5. Statements by United Nations Bodies

Representative of UNICEF



The Representative of UNICEF highlighted the particular impact of punitive drug policies on children of African descent, including greater exposure to racial profiling, excessive use of force and criminalisation, with consequences extending to education, social services and future opportunities.

UNICEF called for stronger accountability, systematic police training and child-friendly justice systems grounded in non-discrimination. It stressed that children must be protected from violence, have meaningful access to justice, and be heard in decisions affecting their rights.

Representative of the University for Peace



The Representative of the University for Peace highlighted the racial impact of the so-called "war on drugs", linking punitive and militarised enforcement to racial profiling, over-incarceration and violence against Africans and people of African descent.

The representative stressed that lasting change requires not only accountability after violations, but prevention through education and training. States were urged to train law enforcement and justice officials in non-punitive, human rights-based approaches, strengthen disaggregated data collection and resist the weakening of institutions established to protect racial equality.

6. Statements by civil society (NGOs)

Civil society organisations highlighted the continuing impact of systemic racism, racial profiling and discriminatory policing on Africans and people of African descent. Several interventions stressed that racial bias can influence who is stopped, searched, arrested, subjected to force or incarcerated, while weak accountability and inadequate disaggregated data can make these patterns more difficult to address.

A central concern was the racial impact of punitive drug-control policies. Organisations called for a shift away from criminalisation, incarceration and militarised enforcement towards harm reduction, alternatives to detention, community-based healthcare and human rights-based drug policies, with particular attention to women, children, migrants and people living in poverty.

Speakers also raised specific concerns regarding Afro-descendant communities in Colombia, the United States and Honduras, calling for effective investigations, accountability, protection from discriminatory policing and forced displacement, and access to remedies. Across the interventions, civil society emphasised community participation, independent oversight, legal safeguards, disaggregated data and meaningful remedies as essential to achieving lasting racial justice.

V. Concluding Remarks by the Panellists



In her concluding remarks, Ms. Maryluz Barragán González stressed that States have a legitimate responsibility to address drug trafficking and organised crime, but security measures must not deepen human rights violations affecting people of African descent. She called for drug policies that integrate security with human rights, health, environmental protection, rural development and community participation, supported by an ethno-racial approach and adequate data to identify who bears the consequences of such policies.

Mr. Angelo Camufingo emphasised that systemic racism extends beyond policing and must be addressed across interconnected areas including housing, education, employment, health, social protection and political participation. While stressing the importance of disaggregated data, he cautioned that existing data gaps should not delay action. He called for preventive institutional reform, meaningful participation of people of African descent and systemic governance capable of examining how institutional structures and practices may reproduce inequality.

Ms. Tracie Keesee, Chair of the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement, thanked States and civil society for their engagement and confirmed that the Mechanism would respond in writing to questions raised during the dialogue. Referring to concerns raised about deaths of Black people in the United States, she clarified that the Expert Mechanism is not an investigative body, while recognising the importance of continued engagement on racial justice and law enforcement.

Concluding the dialogue, Ms. Awa Dabo, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, warned that the international community had reached a critical juncture at which progress towards racial justice could either be advanced or reversed. She called for reforms to policing and criminal justice, including community-driven approaches, restrictions on the use of force, prohibition of racial profiling, improved disaggregated data and meaningful participation of people of African descent. She reaffirmed OHCHR's commitment to supporting States and protecting the space for civil society organisations working to advance racial justice.

VI. Conclusion

The dialogue ultimately provides a clear answer to the questions raised at the beginning of this report.

First, the burden of discriminatory enforcement continues to fall disproportionately on Africans and people of African descent, rather than being distributed justly. Second, the benefits of protection, justice, and security are not experienced equally by these affected communities. Finally, current frameworks are frequently reproducing rather than reducing inequality due to a persistent gap between high-level policy commitments and everyday experiences on the ground.

Progress, therefore, cannot be measured by commitments alone. Lasting change requires confronting the root causes of racial discrimination—including the enduring legacies of colonialism and enslavement—and ensuring that success is reflected in reduced racial disparities, stronger institutional accountability, and real, measurable change in people's daily lives.

VII. Position of Geneva International Centre for Justice

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) welcomes the positive initiatives and commitments highlighted during the dialogue, including efforts to strengthen anti-racism frameworks, reform policing practices, promote human rights-based drug policies, improve equality data and expand community participation. GICJ particularly acknowledges the willingness of States to identify existing challenges and engage constructively with international human rights mechanisms.

Despite these developments, a significant gap remains between policy commitments and the everyday experiences of affected communities. Persistent racial profiling, discriminatory enforcement and unequal criminal justice outcomes demonstrate that racial justice must be assessed not only by the adoption of laws and policies, but by their actual impact.

GICJ asserts that the next phase should place greater emphasis on prevention. States should identify discriminatory risks before new policing, surveillance or drug-control measures are introduced, rather than waiting for violations to occur before reviewing their consequences.

GICJ calls upon States to:

- Conduct Racial Justice Impact Assessments before introducing new policing, surveillance, drug-control measures, or AI technologies.
- Establish measurable indicators for stops, searches, arrests, use of force, sentencing, and remedies, and publish regular progress.
- Address institutional responsibility—including command structures and resource allocation—rather than treating systemic disparities as isolated individual misconduct.
- Strengthen independent civilian oversight to ensure prompt investigations and effective remedies for policing violations.
- Redirect resources toward prevention, including education, healthcare, employment, and community development.
- Ensure meaningful participation of affected communities in designing and evaluating policies that impact them.
- Create systematic follow-up mechanisms to track the implementation of international recommendations and monitor whether racial disparities are declining.

Lastly, **GICJ** stresses that lasting change requires confronting the root causes of racial discrimination. Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, it is time to address not only the continuing legacies of colonialism and enslavement, but also the attitudes, stereotypes, and structural inequalities they have left behind. Education must form a core part of this response. From an early age, children should learn about equality, human dignity, cultural diversity, and the historical roots of racial discrimination, helping to challenge prejudice before it becomes deeply embedded.



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