



GICJ AFRICAN AFFAIRS

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE DURBAN
DECLARATION AND PROGRAM OF ACTION

An Overview of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)

By Patricia Jjuuko and Jamelia Nampijja Sztuchlik

Background and History

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly convened the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related intolerance. This global conference was subsequently held from 31 August to 8 September 2001 in Durban, South Africa.

The conference brought together representatives from over 160 states, as well as international organisations and civil society actors, to address global issues related to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. It was organised in response to the growing recognition of the enduring effects of historical injustices, including slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and systems like apartheid. Additionally, there were rising concerns regarding contemporary forms of discrimination linked to migration and globalisation.

The primary outcome of the conference was the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA). The DDPA aimed to provide a comprehensive international framework for acknowledging these historical legacies and guiding member states in developing policies and measures to combat racism at the national, regional, and global levels.

Key Principles and Objectives

The DDPA establishes guiding principles to promote equality, dignity, and respect for all individuals. It reaffirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, emphasising the importance of addressing both historical and contemporary forms of discrimination.

Key Principles and Objectives

A central objective of the DDPA is to recognise and remedy the lasting impacts of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and genocide, which continue to shape patterns of inequality today.

The document also highlights the responsibility of states to develop and implement national policies that prevent and combat racism. It calls for stronger legal frameworks, effective enforcement mechanisms, and inclusive public policies that address structural discrimination. Education, awareness-raising, and the promotion of cultural diversity are emphasised as essential tools for fostering tolerance and social cohesion.

Programme of Action

The Programme of Action complements the Declaration by outlining concrete measures for implementation at the national, regional, and international levels. It encourages governments to adopt national action plans against racism, strengthen institutions that protect human rights, and ensure that victims of discrimination have access to justice.

Additionally, the Programme of Action places particular emphasis on vulnerable and marginalised groups, including people of African descent, Indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, and minorities. It calls for targeted policies to address the unique challenges faced by these groups, including economic exclusion, limited access to education, and social stigma.

Furthermore, the Programme of Action highlights the importance of international cooperation, civil society, and the private sector in combating racism. It promotes partnerships and dialogue as essential components for achieving effective and sustainable change

Impact and Continuing Relevance

Since its adoption, the DDPA has served as a crucial reference framework for anti-racism efforts worldwide. It has influenced national legislation, guided international human rights initiatives, and laid the foundation for ongoing dialogue on racial justice. At the national level, this impact is reflected in concrete measures: 42 states have enacted or modified laws to prohibit racial discrimination, 35 have established specialised bodies to combat racism, and 23 have adopted specific national policies. Additionally, by 2021, 182 states were parties to the legally binding International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), reinforcing the global legal framework against racism.

Despite some progress, racism and discrimination continue to be significant challenges, highlighting the ongoing importance of the DDPA. In an increasingly interconnected world, the principles and commitments outlined in the DDPA are essential for promoting inclusive societies and ensuring that equality and dignity are upheld for everyone.

Challenges and Limitations of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Since its adoption, the DDPA has faced persistent political and diplomatic obstacles. Though it was endorsed by over 160 states at the World Conference against Racism 2001 in Durban, key countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel, rejected the Declaration.

This rejection was largely due to disagreements over language addressing the Middle East and historical accountability. These political divisions have continued to affect follow-up initiatives, with several review conferences being boycotted by major states, which undermines the continuity and effectiveness of the DDPA as a global anti-racism framework.

Beyond political disagreements, the DDPA has encountered significant challenges in its implementation. As a non-binding instrument, it relies heavily on the political will and resources of individual countries, resulting in uneven progress across regions. UN mechanisms responsible for monitoring and supporting implementation often face funding constraints, and civil society initiatives have struggled to translate the Declaration's broad goals into concrete policies.

Furthermore, the evolving nature of racism, including online hate speech, anti-migrant sentiment, rising religious intolerance, and the emergence of biased Artificial Intelligence (AI), has required ongoing reinterpretation of the DDPA. This highlights the difficulty of applying a single framework to a changing global context.

A key aspect of implementing the DDPA is ensuring its accessibility through translation and interpretation into multiple languages. The UN officially provides the DDPA texts in all six UN official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. This multilingual approach enables governments, civil society organisations, and local communities worldwide to engage with the DDPA accurately.

However, translating complex legal, historical, and cultural concepts can be challenging, as nuances may differ across languages, potentially affecting interpretation and implementation.

Furthermore, the DDPA still needs to be translated into more languages beyond the UN official six to reach additional regions and linguistic communities, particularly in Africa, Asia, and indigenous territories. Therefore, careful attention to terminology and context is essential to maintain the integrity of the DDPA's principles and to foster a shared understanding across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Despite these challenges, the DDPA continues to serve as a reference point for governments, international organisations, and civil society in their ongoing efforts to confront racism, promote equality, and uphold human rights worldwide.

About GICJ Africa Group

The Africa group at Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) is a coalition dedicated to advocating for human rights, justice, and peace across the African continent and for people of African descent. Operating within the framework of GICJ, the group provides expert analysis and policy recommendations to international bodies, governments, and civil society organisations.

Through research, advocacy, and engagement with the United Nations mechanisms, the GICJ Africa Group works to amplify African voices in global discussions on peace, security, and development.

The Africa Group, is actively engaged in addressing the ongoing issues of racism, racial discrimination, and slavery, with a strong focus on supporting the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Recognising the deep historical and structural roots of racial injustice, the team works to expose contemporary forms of discrimination, advocate for reparative justice, and amplify the voices of affected community. The Africa team continues to push for accountability, equality, and the dismantling of systemic racism in line with the principles of the Durban Declaration & Programme of Action (DDPA)

Marking 25 Years of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action: Normative Progress in the Fight for the Rights of People of African Descent

By *Jamelia Nampijja Sztuchlik* / GICJ

2026 marks the 25th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), a significant milestone in the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Adopted on 8 September 2001 during the historic World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, the DDPA established a new standard for international commitments to equality, justice, and human rights for communities worldwide, with a particular focus on people of African descent.

Over the past quarter-century, the DDPA has catalysed significant normative development, laying the groundwork for monitoring mechanisms, advocacy, and legislative progress. A key player in this evolution has been the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG), which was established by resolution 2002/68 of the Commission on Human Rights and approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2002/270 on 25 July 2002.

The IGWG serves as a vital mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the DDPA and to draft a United Nations Declaration on the Human Rights of People of African Descent. It has functioned as a critical forum for reconciling diverse regional perspectives and advancing a robust normative framework to combat systemic discrimination.

Normative Development: The Role of the IGWG

The IGWG is dedicated to defining and strengthening the legal and normative frameworks necessary to protect the rights of people of African descent.

The work of the IGWG involves several phases, including drafting initial documents, conducting interactive readings, reviewing member states' obligations, facilitating regional consultations, and promoting standards that confront structural racism and address historical injustices.



A significant achievement in this process has been the Second Reading of the Draft Declaration on the Human Rights of People of African Descent. This took place during the 24th session of the IGWG, which was held from 15 - 17 October 2025 at the United Nations in Geneva. This meeting was part of the Human Rights Council's intersessional calendar but was specifically focused on the draft declaration and DDPA implementation. It represented a critical moment for refining the text, incorporating feedback from multiple stakeholders, including civil society, national human rights institutions, and regional organisations.

Chronology Leading to the Second Reading

- 2002–2022: The IGWG was established, with early sessions focused on defining its scope, principles, and objectives.
- 2023–Early 2024: The first Reading consolidated proposals from Member States and incorporated input from civil society.
- Mid 2024–2025: Regional consultations took place across Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Pacific to refine the draft and identify priority issues.
- 2025 (Second Reading): During the 24th IGWG session, the revisions were finalised, strengthening accountability, acknowledging historical injustices, and integrating regional perspectives.
- 2026 and Beyond: The IGWG will continue its work towards the final adoption and implementation of the Declaration, translating the DDPA's vision into actionable and enforceable standards.

Key Dimensions of the Second Reading of the Draft Declaration

The Second Reading of the Draft Declaration on the Human Rights of People of African Descent marked a significant milestone in the development of protections for people of African descent. It involved more than just textual revisions; it was a comprehensive effort to tackle systemic inequalities, confront historical injustices, and establish practical mechanisms to ensure enforceable rights. The following three key dimensions stand out:

1. Recognition of Historical Injustices

A central focus of the Second Reading was the explicit acknowledgement of historical injustices, including the transatlantic slave trade, colonial exploitation, and systemic discrimination that has persisted across generations. By codifying this recognition, the Draft Declaration affirms the historical roots of contemporary inequalities and frames them not only as moral issues but also as central matters of international human rights

This recognition serves multiple purposes: it legitimises claims for reparatory measures, informs policies aimed at eradicating persistent socioeconomic disparities, and strengthens the moral and legal basis for global solidarity with people of African descent. Importantly, it highlights that historical wrongs continue to have structural consequences that must be addressed through state action and international cooperation.

2. Strengthened Mechanisms for Accountability

Another crucial aspect of the Second Reading was the enhancement of accountability and monitoring mechanisms. While previous drafts emphasised rights in principle, the revised text imposes stronger obligations on states to implement, monitor, and report on progress.

Key measures include:

- Mandatory reporting by states to relevant UN bodies regarding actions taken to prevent racial discrimination and protect the rights of people of African descent.
- Clear benchmarks for evaluating progress, enabling civil society and international organisations to hold states accountable.
- Encouragement for the establishment of independent national bodies to monitor compliance and investigate systemic racism.

These mechanisms aim to ensure that the Declaration evolves from aspirational language into actionable commitments that can be tracked, assessed, and enforced at both national and international levels.

3. Integration of Regional Perspectives

The Second Reading also highlighted the importance of integrating regional perspectives. People of African descent experience discrimination differently depending on historical, cultural, and political contexts. The Draft Declaration now explicitly reflects the diverse realities of communities across Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific regions.

By including these perspectives, the text ensures:

- Policies and recommendations are contextually relevant and sensitive to local realities.
- Global human rights norms are applied in ways that respect cultural, social, and historical specificities.
- Voices from historically marginalised and underrepresented communities are meaningfully included in shaping international standards.

This inclusive approach strengthens the legitimacy and applicability of the Declaration, transforming it into a truly global instrument that addresses both shared and unique challenges faced by people of African descent worldwide.

Recent Regional Consultations

To ensure the Draft Declaration is inclusive and representative, the IGWG has facilitated regional consultations across Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific. These consultations provided platforms for governments, NGOs, and grassroots organisations to voice concerns, share experiences, and propose recommendations for strengthening protections. Common themes included:

- Combating racial profiling and discrimination in criminal justice systems.
- Addressing socioeconomic inequalities rooted in historical injustices.
- Ensuring meaningful participation of people of African descent in policymaking processes.

The insights gained from these consultations have been instrumental in refining the Draft Declaration, ensuring it is both aspirational and actionable. They highlight the international community's ongoing commitment to translating the principles of the DDPA into tangible legal and policy outcomes.

Looking Ahead

As we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the DDPA, the international community is called upon to reaffirm its commitment to the rights of people of African descent. The ongoing work of the IGWG and the development of the Draft Declaration demonstrate the potential for multilateral collaboration to create enforceable standards that challenge systemic inequality. The journey from Durban to today importantly shows that normative development is not a static process: it is ongoing and consultative, requiring vigilance, advocacy, and political will. With the continuous efforts of the IGWG and insights gained from regional consultations, the vision of a world free from racism and discrimination is closer to becoming a reality than ever before.



25 Years of Advancing Racial Justice Through the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

By Melody Ugochi Nnaji / GICJ

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) marks its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2026, representing a quarter-century of international commitment to confronting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related forms of discrimination. Adopted during the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2001, the DDPA established a historic framework recognising the enduring consequences of slavery and colonialism on people of African descent and other marginalised communities worldwide. This recognition was unprecedented in international law, explicitly acknowledging slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as crimes against humanity and identifying colonialism as a major source of racial inequalities.

The declaration emerged from discussions involving member states and international actors and reflected persistent demands from African and Caribbean states to address historical injustices that had long been minimised or overlooked within the international human rights arena. Twenty-five years on, the DDPA continues to guide efforts to combat racism and support the rights of people of African descent. Long before the DDPA was adopted, international efforts to combat racism were rooted in foundational human rights instruments.



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) set out the principle that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that discrimination on the basis of race or other status is a violation of human rights. Building on this, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) became the principal legally binding treaty requiring states to eliminate racial discrimination and promote racial equality. These instruments focused on the prohibition of discrimination but did not directly address the lasting effects of slavery and colonialism that continue to influence contemporary racial inequalities. After years of preparatory work and regional meetings, the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was convened from 31 August to 7 September 2001 in Durban, South Africa under UN auspices.

. The objectives of the conference were to produce a declaration that acknowledged the damage caused by historical and contemporary forms of racism, to agree on a strong programme of practical actions that states and societies could undertake and to build a global alliance involving governments and civil society to carry the fight against racism forward. The outcome of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action marked an important step in recognising the historical roots of racism. The declaration specifically recognised slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as crimes against humanity. Paragraph 13 of the DDPA affirms that “slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity... and should always have been crimes against humanity.” The declaration also recognised that the consequences of these practices continue to affect people of African descent and require sustained international attention (DDPA, para. 13).

The DDPA further acknowledged the lasting effects of colonialism. In paragraph 14, states recognised that colonialism contributed to racial discrimination and continues to influence inequalities in many parts of the world. By acknowledging the connection between past injustices and present-day circumstances, the declaration underscored the need to address the underlying causes of racial inequality (DDPA, para. 14).

This acknowledgment also contributed to broader developments within International Human Rights Law.

It strengthened discussions on accountability, racial justice and the rights of people of African descent, and encouraged further international initiatives addressing these issues.

One example is the International Decade for People of African Descent, proclaimed by the United Nations, which sought to promote recognition, justice and development for people of African descent. In this way, the DDPA helped expand the global conversation from simply prohibiting racial discrimination to examining the historical structures that continue to sustain inequality.

As the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action marks its twenty-fifth year, this anniversary offers an opportunity not only to reflect on the progress made since 2001, but also to reaffirm the commitment of states and international institutions to address the enduring consequences of colonialism and slavery. Strengthening the implementation of the DDPA and advancing policies that promote equality will remain essential steps toward ensuring that the principles set out in Durban continue to guide global efforts to combat racism and to protect the rights of affected communities.

Twenty-five years after its adoption, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action continues to serve as an important international framework for addressing racism and racial discrimination. Over the years, it has influenced discussions within the United Nations and encouraged states to strengthen national laws and policies aimed at combating racial discrimination and promoting equality. Despite the progress made since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, many of the inequalities linked to slavery and colonialism are still present today. In different parts of the world, people of African descent continue to experience discrimination and unequal access to opportunities in areas such as education, employment and political participation. These challenges show that the effects of past racial injustices have not completely disappeared.

For this reason, the recognition contained in the DDPA remains important. The declaration encourages states and international institutions to continue addressing racism in all its forms. Discussions within bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council continue to highlight the need for sustained efforts to combat discrimination and promote equality for communities affected by racism.

The Role of Education in Combating Racism: 25 Years of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

By Theresa Mose / GICJ

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), adopted in September 2001 at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, remains one of the most significant international commitments to combating racism. Building on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of 1965, the DDPA advances a broader understanding of racism by recognizing its structural and historical dimensions, including the enduring legacies of slavery and colonialism. As the DDPA marks its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2026, it provides an opportunity not only to reflect on progress but also to assess persistent implementation gaps.

At the core of its many areas of focus is education. The DDPA is cognisant of the fact that racism is not sustained by individual prejudice, but thrives under social systems, including what is taught, whose histories are prioritized, and which knowledge systems are legitimized. Education is therefore not neutral; it can either reinforce existing inequalities or serve as a transformative tool for challenging them. In this sense, the call to decolonize education involves re-examining the hierarchies that shape curricula and transfer of knowledge. This article examines how education systems have responded to the DDPA's commitments over the years.

Curriculum Reform: Progress and Persistent Gaps

Since the adoption of the DDPA, several States have undertaken curriculum reforms aligned with its principles. South Africa, for example, introduced the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which incorporates human rights education and critical engagement with the country's apartheid history. Brazil's Law 10.639 (2003) mandates the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture across schools, representing a concrete legislative effort to address historical exclusion. Rwanda's post-genocide education reforms similarly reflect an intentional effort to move away from ethnically divisive colonial-era narratives.

However, such examples remain uneven and are often accompanied by broader resistance or limited implementation. In some contexts, particularly in the United States, debates around race-related curricula have led to legislative restrictions on certain forms of teaching about race and inequality.

Normative Framework: Education Under the DDPA

The DDPA establishes a comprehensive framework for education in combating racism. Paragraph 98 affirms that education at all levels is essential for transforming attitudes and behaviours that sustain discrimination. The Programme of Action further operationalizes this through paragraphs 129 and 133, which call on States to integrate anti-racism content into curricula, strengthen legal protections for equality in education, and provide training for teachers and public officials on the causes and consequences of racism. The DDPA also emphasizes public awareness through media, civil society engagement, and inclusive approaches to history and cultural heritage.



These commitments are grounded in broader international human rights law. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes education as a fundamental right, while Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights requires education to promote the full development of the human personality and respect for human rights.

While not always explicitly framed as restrictions on critical race theory, these measures reflect broader contestations over how history and structural inequality are taught in schools. In the United Kingdom, a government-commissioned report on racial disparities published in 2021 attracted significant international criticism, including from UN bodies, for its characterization of racism and institutional inequality. In many lower-income states, challenges are less ideological and more structural. Education systems may continue to rely on legacy materials, face limited funding, and operate within externally influenced examination frameworks that shape curricular content. In such settings, international commitments have not always translated into the budgetary allocations and institutional reforms necessary for meaningful implementation.

Another key limitation is the absence or weakness of national action plans. The DDPA encouraged States to develop comprehensive strategies to combat racism, yet many countries have either not adopted such plans or have implemented them in ways that lack clear targets, timelines, or enforceable mechanisms. Teacher training also represents a critical gap. Reports by UN mechanisms have noted that in many States, teacher education does not intentionally include training on structural racism or the historical contexts of discrimination. Without adequately prepared educators, even well-designed curricula may have limited impact in practice.

Recommendations

To strengthen the implementation of the DDPA's educational commitments, States should move beyond symbolic measures toward substantive and sustained curriculum reform. This includes integrating the histories and legacies of slavery, colonialism, and racial discrimination into educational content at all levels, supported by clear international benchmarks and measurable indicators.

Equally important is investment in teacher training, including mandatory components on structural racism, human rights education, and inclusive pedagogical approaches. Without adequately prepared educators, curriculum reforms are unlikely to translate into meaningful classroom outcomes.

Finally, persistent funding constraints hinder implementation, particularly in States that face broader development challenges. Limited resources affect curriculum development, teacher training, and the ability to sustain long-term educational reforms.

Emerging Opportunities and Commendable Practices

Despite these challenges, several developments point to emerging opportunities. The global response to the murder of George Floyd in 2020 prompted renewed attention to racial inequality, leading institutions such as schools, universities, museums, and publishers to reassess curricula and content. While the long-term impact of these changes remains uncertain, they demonstrate that institutional reform is possible when supported by public awareness and political momentum. Youth-led advocacy and civil society initiatives have also played an important role in advancing educational reform and accountability. These actors often help bridge gaps left by State inaction and contribute to raising awareness of racial justice issues at both local and global levels. At the international level, UNESCO continues to provide normative guidance through frameworks such as its 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, as well as its Global Citizenship Education programme. These initiatives promote inclusive, equitable education and offer States reference points for reform, even in the absence of binding obligations.

States should also strengthen public awareness initiatives, particularly in digital spaces where misinformation and racial stereotypes can spread rapidly. In tandem with this, international frameworks should continue to evolve to address emerging forms of discrimination, including those mediated through technology.

At the policy level, monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be reinforced. States should incorporate education as a core component of national action plans against racism, with defined budget allocations, measurable targets, and regular reporting. International bodies, including treaty monitoring mechanisms, should play a more active role in assessing progress and encouraging compliance.

Conclusion

As the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action marks its twenty-fifth anniversary, education remains one of the most powerful yet underutilized tools for advancing its objectives. While some progress has been made, implementation has been uneven and often constrained by political, structural, and financial barriers. Without sustained commitment to curriculum reform, teacher training, and institutional accountability, the structural conditions that perpetuate racial inequality are likely to persist. The coming years present an opportunity to strengthen education as a genuine instrument of justice, aligned with the DDPA's vision of equality, dignity, and non-discrimination.

Diplomacy of the Cross: Pope Leo XIV Visit to Cameroon as a Moral Lens on Dialogue, Justice, and Peace

By Itoe Francis Ebongue / GICJ

As Pope Leo XIV prepares for his April 2026 visit to Africa, Cameroon finds itself at a critical juncture. The Pontiff's arrival from 15 to 18 April promises more than spiritual guidance; many observers view it as a potential catalyst for dialogue, reconciliation, and political accountability in a nation long marred by unrest. His African itinerary also includes Algeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea, underscoring the Vatican's growing engagement with the continent.

Historical Context: The Southern Cameroons Crisis

The significance of Pope Leo's visit to Cameroon is heightened by the protracted Southern Cameroons crisis. Beginning in 2016, peaceful protests by lawyers and teachers in the North-West and South-West regions were met with force. By 2017, the government's actions escalated the conflict, displacing hundreds of thousands, fracturing communities, and disrupting the social fabric.

International legal institutions have weighed in on these events. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Community Court of Justice ruled in 2018 that Nigeria violated the rights of ten Southern Cameroons activists, known as the "NERA10," who were abducted from Abuja and transferred to Cameroon.

In 2009, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, recognized systemic violations and called for meaningful constitutional dialogue. These rulings underscore the importance of law, justice, and inclusive governance in achieving sustainable peace.

Civil Society and Church Expectations

Civil society leaders are cautiously optimistic about the Papal visit. "Moral leadership from the Church could help reopen dialogue where politics has failed," said human rights advocate, barrister, and CEO for Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) Felix Agbor Nkongho. Many, including national and regional religious leaders, hope Pope Francis's presence will invigorate both spiritual reflection and political engagement.

Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bamenda in Cameroon stressed that "peace will only come through sincere dialogue and justice for affected communities". Voices from Ghana and other neighboring countries have similarly urged non-violent solutions and inclusive negotiations.

Framing the Visit: Opportunity for Accountability and Peace

In Cameroon, media coverage has generally framed the Papal visit as a unifying moment, emphasizing the Church's dual role as a spiritual institution and moral compass. Civil society groups are calling for an international Peace Pact Conference, inviting government officials, Southern Cameroons representatives, religious leaders, diaspora, and international mediators to address the root causes of the conflict and establish a framework for lasting peace.

Amid displacement, economic hardship, and political uncertainty, observers see the Pope's visit as an opportunity to reinforce accountability, democratic governance, and civilian protection.

A Moral and International Imperative

The Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) has stressed that lasting peace in Cameroon requires inclusive dialogue, respect for human rights, and adherence to international legal frameworks. In anticipation of the visit, GICJ has urged all parties to prioritize civilian protection, democratic governance, and justice for victims, underscoring that moral leadership, coupled with international support, is essential to achieving reconciliation.

Effective implementation: Evaluating the shift from political commitments to concrete resource allocation and the development of National Action Plans.

By Teboho Mosebo/ GICJ

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) relies on periodic UN budget proposals and voluntary contributions, with no single, permanent funding allocation. As of late 2023, the UN identified an additional \$233,800 (net of staff assessment) needed for 2024 to implement specific DDPA tasks, including conference management (\$30,800) and human rights activities (\$203,000). Looking ahead, the UN anticipates requirements of \$278,300 (net) for 2025, with a separate one-time allocation of \$24,500 planned for 2026. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) relies on periodic UN budget proposals and voluntary contributions, with no single, permanent funding allocation.

As of late 2023, the UN identified an additional \$233,800 (net of staff assessment) needed for 2024 to implement specific DDPA tasks, including conference management (\$30,800) and human rights activities (\$203,000). Looking ahead, the UN anticipates requirements of \$278,300 (net) for 2025, with a separate one-time allocation of \$24,500 planned for 2026.

The implementation of DDPA has seen various resource allocation efforts globally. For instance, South Africa is a notable and key example since the programme was adopted in its soil in 31 August 2001. The South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development allocated approximately R6 million for the period 2020/21–2024/25 to implement the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. This supports initiatives like educational campaigns.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Council launched a two-year communications campaign in 2022, focusing on "Learn, speak up, act!" to raise awareness for the DDPA and people of African descent. On the other side, the European Union has utilised the European Social Fund to promote social cohesion, notably through the "More Inclusion Less Exclusion" (MILE) project.

Development of National Action Plans

Several countries have made notable progress in implementing National Action Plans (NAPs) against racism. South Africa, Canada, and the UK are among those leading the charge, with initiatives like NAPs and anti-discrimination laws. For instance, South Africa's National Action Plan aims to promote equality and combat racism.

The Way Forward

The journey towards eradicating racism is far from over. Governments must prioritize funding and resource allocation for DDPA implementation. Civil society organisations, communities, and individuals must hold governments accountable and push for policy reforms. We need increased awareness, education, and dialogue to dismantle racist structures. Let's work together to turn the tide against racism – support anti-racism initiatives, amplify marginalised voices, and demand action from leaders.

The implementation of NAPs demonstrates a growing recognition of the need to address systemic racism, but their effectiveness hinges on robust implementation and resource allocation. South Africa's NAP has led to targeted initiatives like the Rapid Response Mechanism Team. However, challenges persist in scaling up efforts and addressing structural barriers. The main challenges include insufficient human resources, limited rapid financing, inconsistent data collection, inadequate training, and ad-hoc approaches.

Other countries, like Australia, Greece, and Mexico, have established equality bodies and national boards to investigate complaints and promote anti-racism efforts. These initiatives include training programs and policy reforms aimed at tackling racism and promoting inclusivity.

Challenges

The DDPA faces significant funding challenges due to its reliance on voluntary state contributions. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has experienced liquidity crises, leading to reduced allocations and postponed programs. Many states prioritise other interests over DDPA implementation, neglecting initiatives like education and affirmative action.

These funding shortfalls impact the DDPA's effectiveness. Communication campaigns suffer from reduced visibility, and technical support for countries is limited. Securing funding for reparatory justice remains a hurdle, exacerbated by structural barriers and lack of political will.

