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**FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE**

SUMMARY

This document concerns UNESCO's action in its fields of competence with a view to combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the context of the follow-up to the World Conference in Durban, South Africa, 31 August-8 September 2001.

Decision required: paragraph 50.

INTRODUCTION

1. UNESCO's action to combat racism and racial discrimination is inseparable from its concerns relating to the observance of human rights. Its Constitution, after observing in its preamble that "the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races", states in Article 1 that the Organization's purpose is "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed by the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion ...".

2. In compliance with this constitutional provision, UNESCO has been unremitting in its action to combat racism and its institutionalized form of apartheid. In its efforts to counter the harmful effects of globalization, it plans to strengthen its action to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

3. It is against this background that our Organization took an active part in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was held in Durban (South Africa), from 31 August to 8 September 2001. The Conference adopted by consensus a Declaration and Programme of Action that ties in at numerous points with UNESCO's action to combat all forms of racism. This is particularly the case with the recommendations specifically addressed to it in paragraphs 120, 126, 156, 179, 192, 195 and 202 of the Programme of Action.¹

4. It would seem appropriate, before reporting on the activities that the Organization might undertake by way of follow-up to the World Conference, to summarize the main lines of UNESCO's action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, to highlight UNESCO's contribution to the Conference and to suggest the outlines of a UNESCO strategy for pursuing its action against racism.

Norms and standards established by UNESCO in its struggle against racism

Some key instruments:

5. The essential document drawn up and adopted by UNESCO with a view to combating racism is the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, adopted by the General Conference at its 20th session (Paris, 27 November 1978).

What distinguishes it from earlier UNESCO instruments dealing with race, racial prejudice and racial discrimination is the fact that it is the first general instrument adopted by the General Conference covering all aspects of the problem of race and racism and establishing a unique standard of reference reflecting UNESCO's multidisciplinary remit. Its scope extends far beyond the purely legal implications of the question, taking in the biological, sociological, cultural, economic and political aspects of racism and elucidating its origins and causes.

¹ United Nations Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, 31 August-8 September 2001 (A/CONF.189/12)
<http://www.unhchr.ch/hchr.un.htm>

6. While not a treaty with binding force, the Declaration may be regarded as an expression of the principles generally accepted by the international community and incorporated into contemporary international human rights law on a customary basis.

7. Since its adoption by the General Conference in 1978, the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice has been the subject of five comprehensive reports by the Director-General concerning the situation in the world in the fields covered by the Declaration.

8. Almost two decades after the 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, the General Conference adopted at its 29th session on 11 November 1997 the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights. This international instrument on bioethics is essentially in line with the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice and the research and studies carried out by UNESCO to invalidate definitively the pseudo-scientific foundations of racism.

9. The Declaration lays particular emphasis, firstly, on respect for the dignity of the human person, stating in Article 2 that:

“a) Everyone has a right to respect for their dignity and for their rights regardless of their genetic characteristics;

b) That dignity makes it imperative not to reduce individuals to their genetic characteristics and to respect their uniqueness and diversity ...”. Secondly, it stresses non-discrimination in relation to genetic characteristics. Thus, Article 6 states that “No one shall be subjected to discrimination based on genetic characteristics that is intended to infringe, or has the effect of infringing, human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity”.

10. **The Declaration of Principles on Tolerance** (1995) follows the same lines as the 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, to which it refers twice. It repeats in Article 2.4 the assertion in the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice that “All individuals and groups have the right to be different” (Article 1.2). In Article 3.3, it affirms with the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice that “measures must be taken to ensure equality in dignity and rights for individuals and groups wherever necessary ...”.

Action taken in its special fields of competence

11. The elimination of racism and, more generally, the promotion of human rights being central to UNESCO’s purposes, none of its fields of competence is wholly untouched by these concerns. Some fields however, are more directly concerned, and it is on these that our attention will be focused.

Teaching and education

12. The Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, adopted by the General Conference at its 11th session on 14 December 1960, are aimed not only at eliminating and preventing all forms of discrimination but also at promoting equality of educational opportunity and treatment. They thus correspond to two distinct but complementary objectives embodied in UNESCO’s Constitution. The scope of the commitments made by the States Parties to the Convention vary according to the purpose, whether the elimination of discrimination or ensuring equality of opportunity. Under Article 3, States undertake to take a series of immediate measures : they must in particular abrogate or modify any statutory provisions and discontinue any administrative practices that involve discrimination. They must likewise prohibit certain preferences based on the grounds that pupils belong to a particular group. They must furthermore, through a

complex effort involving not merely budgetary measures, ensure equality of educational opportunity.

13. The Recommendation concerning International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted on 19 November 1974 by the General Conference, also represents a not insignificant contribution to the establishment of international norms to combat racism and racial discrimination. This instrument “applies to all stages and forms of education”. It stipulates notably that: “Member States should take appropriate steps to ensure that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination becomes an integral part of the developing personality of each child, adolescent, young person and adult”.

Culture

14. The main instrument in this field drawn up by UNESCO to combat racism in all its forms is the **Recommendation on Participation by the People at Large in Cultural Life and Their Contribution to It**, adopted by the General Conference on 26 November 1976. This Recommendation is aimed at protecting cultural rights as human rights and at ensuring by legislative and regulatory means, but also through technical, economic, financial and other measures, public access to and participation in culture. The Recommendation specifies that “participation by the greatest possible number of people and associations in a wide variety of cultural activities of their own free choice is essential to the development of the basic human values and dignity of the individual”.

15. The launching of “The Slave Route” project was approved by the General Conference at its 27th session, in 1993 (27 C/Resolution 3.13), and warmly welcomed by the World Conference against Racism in Durban. This project, consisting of four major programmes, was undertaken to highlight the underlying causes and manifestations of the slave trade and slavery and to assess its consequences by observing the cultural, historical and spiritual interactions to which it has given rise in the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean region.

Communication and information

16. UNESCO became aware relatively early of the importance of communication, in terms both of its potential dangers and also of its many advantages. The Organization’s concerns in that regard led it to adopt a standard-setting instrument: the **Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War**.

17. The Declaration comprises a preamble and eleven articles. The importance of information and the responsibility of the media, notably with regard to combating racism and racial discrimination, are affirmed in many articles, in particular:

Article I: “...the countering of racialism, apartheid and incitement to war demand a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information...”;

Article III: “The mass media have an important contribution to make to the strengthening of peace (...) and in countering racialism, apartheid (...).”

UNESCO's contribution to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

18. One of the most visible aspects of UNESCO's contribution and active participation in the World Conference was undoubtedly the statement delivered in the plenary meeting by the UNESCO representative, Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences, Mr Pierre Sané, as well as the organization of three panel discussions.

19. The Head of the UNESCO Delegation made a statement at the plenary meeting on 3 September 2001. The ADG/SHS presented a brief overview of UNESCO's activities to counter racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. He drew attention to the UNESCO Slave Route Project, which aims particularly at breaking the silence and tackling the denial of the plight of the millions of victims of the slave trade. He then welcomed as an indispensable complement to the restitution of the historical truth the initiative of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to draw the "attention of the international community to the cases of massive and flagrant violations of human rights which should be considered as crimes against humanity and which have, to date, benefited from impunity, in spite of the tragic suffering which slavery, colonialism and wars of conquest have inflicted on numerous peoples of the world". He reminded the participants that the present challenges and obstacles must not be overlooked. In the globalized market economy, poverty remained a sad reality for one third of the world population, afflicting mainly marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, such as indigenous peoples, national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, migrants and migrant workers, internally displaced persons, etc. He specifically recalled the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (1997) and underlined that the gene revolution had raised great hopes and aspirations, but also held great risks for the humanity which must be properly understood. The Head of the UNESCO Delegation stressed the absolute necessity of establishing safeguards that would prevent the misapplication of new genetics, leading to new forms of discrimination. He underscored, finally, that UNESCO, drawing inspiration from its constitutional mandate, would continue to implement innovative practices in all of its fields of competence and in close cooperation with other international and local actors so as to establish firmly the principles of dignity and equality of men and women and ensure meaningful follow-up to WCAR.

20. UNESCO's exhibition at the Conference was very successful. UNESCO's position paper "UNESCO against Racism" with the Director-General's introduction was published in English and French and was widely disseminated, along with a special issue of *UNESCO Courier*, "Why Racism" and a number of UNESCO publications on human rights which met with great success. One of them – *United to Combat Racism* – which was prepared specially for the Conference by UNESCO in cooperation with OHCHR, was launched jointly by the Head of the UNESCO Delegation and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This book was also mentioned in the closing statement of the High Commissioner.

The three panel discussions organized by UNESCO at Durban were:

21. The New Aspects of Racism in the Age of Globalization and the Gene Revolution (3 September). This panel provided an opportunity to discuss new forms of racism and discrimination that are reinforced by globalization, growing economic inequalities and social uncertainty.

22. Particular stress was laid on the emergence of cultural racism and on the threats that can arise from genetics in the form of creeping eugenics. This situation called for preventive action in the fields of education, bioethics and urban policy if new forms of apartheid were to be avoided.

23. The Slave Route: Slavery and Racism (4 September). This panel discussion placed the spotlight on the issues central to the Conference debates: the historical and ideological link between slavery and racism against Black peoples; the racial factor as a fundamental characteristic of the slave trade and transatlantic slavery in relation to all the major historical slave practices; the recognition of slavery as a factor of underdevelopment in Africa and the Caribbean. The question of reparations was also on the agenda for discussion.

The World Conference made progress in three significant directions:

- (a) Recognition of the slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity;
- (b) Recognition of the twofold link between slavery and racism and slavery and underdevelopment;
- (c) The commendation of the “Slave Route” project and invitation to UNESCO to place all available information at the disposal of the international community at the earliest possible date.

24. Racism and the Impact and Role of Media. The aim of this panel discussion, organized on 5 September by UNESCO in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and in partnership with the International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), was to examine the role that the media can play in protecting human rights and combating racism.

25. It proceeded from the dual premise that the media are the mirror of our world and should reflect it in an independent, complete and objective manner; and that they are the product of our world and as such may display racism, prejudice and intolerance.

Requests submitted directly to UNESCO by the Durban World Conference

26. UNESCO was mentioned in the Programme of Action (A/CONF.189/12). The fields concerned are as follows:

Culture

27. The Conference “*Salutes* the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization made within the framework of the Slave Route Project and requests that the outcome be made available to the international community as soon as possible;” (para. 120).

28. The Conference “*Endorses* efforts of the international community, in particular steps taken under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to promote respect for and preserve cultural diversity within and between communities and nations with a view to creating a harmonious multicultural world, including elaboration of a possible international instrument in this respect in a manner consistent with international human rights instruments;” (para. 179).

29. The Conference “*Invites* the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to continue to organize high-level and other meetings on the Dialogue among Civilizations and, for this purpose, to mobilize funds and promote partnerships;” (para. 192).

Education

30. The Conference “*Urges* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to provide support to States in the preparation of teaching materials and tools for promoting

teaching, training and educational activities relating to human rights and the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;” (para. 156).

31. The Conference “*Encourages* all States, in cooperation with the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other relevant international organizations, to initiate and develop cultural and educational programmes aimed at countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in order to ensure respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings and enhance mutual understanding among all cultures and civilizations. ...;” (para. 126).

The social and human sciences

32. The Conference “*Invites* the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and non-governmental organizations active in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights, to undertake regular consultations with them and to encourage research activities aimed at collecting, maintaining and adapting the technical, scientific, educational and information materials produced by all cultures around the world to fight racism;” (para. 195).

Communication

33. Action by UNESCO in the communication field is not specifically requested in the Durban Programme of Action, but it is obvious that as a lead agency in this field it should continue to work in cooperation with professional organizations on the following topics:

- (a) Development of a journalistic code of ethics, through the production of a guide for journalists;
- (b) Participation in the study programmes already introduced into universities on racism and the media;
- (c) Training of media professionals;
- (d) Research on the new communication technologies, primarily the Internet, and on questions of racism and intolerance; this research could also give rise to the establishment of an observatory, for compiling indexes of legal texts on these subjects, analysing trends and alerting professional circles in the case of abuses.

Transdisciplinary project

34. The Conference “*Urges* States, in close cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to promote the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the objectives of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, which started in 2001, and *invites* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to contribute to these activities;” (para. 202).

35. It would be in UNESCO’s interest to incorporate the requests made to it in its programme of activities over the long term. The scale and significance of the actions that the World Conference is requesting UNESCO to undertake should be reflected in the establishment of a genuine follow-up to the Conference and to the framing of an integrated UNESCO strategy for combating racism.

Outlines of a new UNESCO strategy for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

36. UNESCO is an organization with an ethical and intellectual vocation. From its inception, its conviction has been that it is in the minds of men and women that racism is located, and it is therefore in the minds of men and women that the struggle against racism must primarily be waged. The resurgence of racism and racial discrimination in new forms calls for the development of new strategies of action on the part of the Organization.

37. UNESCO must mobilize the world scientific community in order to respond to the challenges currently posed by the struggle against racism, in particular abuses linked to advances in genetics and the possible manipulations of the human genome arising therefrom. This mobilization of the world scientific community should be institutional rather than on a merely case-by-case basis, on a par with the increasing mobilization that seems to be taking place in genetics around the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights.

38. It is clear, however, that the struggle against racism does not only concern genetic research; it must also address the sociological, cultural, economic and political aspects of this scourge. No institution is better placed to advance scientific proposals for eliminating it than an international multidisciplinary centre for combating racism.

39. All UNESCO's fields of competence give rise to standard-setting activities. There is, therefore, no need to develop a new instrument for the elimination of racism. Such an instrument already exists, cutting across UNESCO's various fields of competence: it is the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice of 1978, which is still far from being fully operational and a long way from realizing its full potential. In order to make of it a benchmark in its field, one which without being binding commands universal assent in the same way as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with regard to the defence of fundamental freedoms, its field of application should also be expanded to cover the new forms of racism and the new faces of discrimination in the age of globalization and of the genetics revolution.

40. But UNESCO's priorities also include culture and education. It should establish a genuine educational programme, at all levels, regarding the problems of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and, more generally, the various phenomena of exclusion and intolerance. It is here that the Organization has a specific "niche" within the United Nations system. In this connection, it would be judicious to carry out a wide-ranging survey to determine whether and to what degree such a programme exists, in particular at the university level.

41. Another area in which the Organization could make its voice heard is in the struggle against xenophobia, a phenomenon familiar in all societies. In-depth studies on the history, origins and modern sources of xenophobia could enable UNESCO to draw up a document of great ethical and educational value.

42. On 26 February 2002, the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a series of resolutions definitively endorsing the Durban documents. Among other things, it approved the creation of a Unit in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint five eminent experts to be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and invited all the organs and agencies of the United Nations to involve themselves in the follow-up of the Conference by adjusting their programmes and medium-term strategies in accordance with their respective mandates.

43. Since the Durban Conference and despite the difficulties experienced in adopting the Conference documents, UNESCO has already made considerable efforts to address the post-Durban requirements.

44. A Section for Combating Racism and Discrimination has been set up in the Social and Human Sciences Sector. Contacts have been made with the new structure for combating discrimination set up within the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and with some competent regional bodies with a view to ensuring the Durban follow-up.

45. Non-governmental organizations maintaining official relations with UNESCO, which held their international conference from 12 to 15 December 2001 at UNESCO, have, through the adoption of a number of resolutions, renewed their firm commitment in favour of the promotion of human rights and peace. They adopted an action plan for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World and reaffirmed their readiness to participate in the follow-up to the Durban Conference, particularly through closer collective cooperation with UNESCO.

46. The Director-General issued a message on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March 2002).

47. Studies on xenophobia, reparations and regional consultations have been initiated very recently.

48. Analysis of the issue of reparations linked to the slave trade and slavery, and further exploration of the legal and ideological foundations of this phenomenon and its relation to racism, remain central to the Slave Route research programme. The cultural, economic, religious and other origins of slavery, and its consequences such as intolerance, discrimination, racism and under-development, likewise form part of the programmes of the Slave Route project. Interdisciplinary projects have recently been started at the subregional and regional levels to shed light on these questions.

49. All these activities should prompt an ambitious housewide effort within the Organization – based on intersectorality and contributions from all disciplines – so that racism, discrimination and xenophobia cease to undermine human, social, cultural and economic relations.

50. Having examined the present document, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

1. Recalling the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice of 1978, the UNESCO Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance of 1995, the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights of 1997 and all the other texts adopted by UNESCO concerning the struggle against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance,
2. Further recalling that the struggle against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance is at the heart of the Organization's mandate,
3. Aware of the need to develop a new strategy for the Organization as a whole regarding the struggle against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance,
4. Having examined document 164 EX/16,

5. Welcoming the fruitful participation of the Organization in the Durban World Conference,
6. Noting the requests directly addressed to UNESCO by the Durban World Conference in paragraphs 120, 126, 156, 179, 192, 195 and 202 of the adopted Programme of Action,
7. Recommends that a study be carried out on the measures required to revitalize the standard-setting texts previously adopted by UNESCO, which, once updated, could continue to serve as benchmarks in the elimination of discrimination and intolerance;
8. Invites the Director-General to develop an integrated strategy to combat racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance in UNESCO's fields of competence, to be submitted to the General Conference at its 32nd session;
9. Also invites the Director-General to study the possibility of setting up an effective mechanism to implement the texts adopted by UNESCO, which could also help to strengthen and publicize the Organization's action in the struggle against racism and intolerance;
10. Further invites the Director-General to launch, in consultation with competent intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, studies on the challenges posed by the modern development of branches of science and technology liable to give rise to new forms of discrimination and exclusion;
11. Invites also the Director-General to ensure the continuation of the Slave Route project through appropriate assistance and the required financial support from various funding sources, to guarantee the sustained execution of the project, in order that it may achieve its objectives;
12. Underscores the importance of increased cooperation with other agencies of the United Nations system, in the first place with the Commission on Human Rights and with regional governmental organizations, for the implementation of specific projects to combat racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance;
13. Appeals to non-governmental organizations to step up their efforts in keeping with the principles of action approved at Durban;
14. Finally invites the Director-General to submit to the Executive Board at its 166th session, a preliminary report on the progress that has been made on the implementation of this decision.