

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Consultation with Civil Society

Joining hands to end racial discrimination

23 November 2016, 15:00 to 18:00
Palais des Nations, Conference Room XX,

Background Note

1. Introduction

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) marked its 50th anniversary in 2015, hosting an event which brought together States, UN bodies and stakeholders to share their reflections on how the Convention has helped make a difference in combatting racial discrimination and celebrate organizations and individuals who have made contributions to the struggle against racial discrimination, identifying contemporary challenges to, as well as, solutions for the eradication of racism and ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

The Committee has thus far made an undeniable contribution to advance a world free from racial discrimination. However, the Committee recognises that much remains to be done and that it continues to have a preeminent role to play in eradicating racial discrimination. The Committee needs to strive to strengthen its work and engagement with civil society organizations as an integral part of this effort.

In light of the worldwide rise in racial discrimination in all its forms, including hate speech, hate crimes and racist attitudes towards migrants and minorities witnessed today, it is important that the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the work of the Committee focuses on addressing these global issues. The Committee also seeks to ensure that its work is effectively addressing and impacting the concerns that are most pressing in various country contexts in order to more directly use the ICERD to eliminate racial discrimination at national, regional and global levels.

The Committee has endeavoured to enhance its relationship with civil society through past efforts such as encouraging civil society to participate in the preparation of the State party reports, submit alternative reports for consideration, follow up on the implementation of its concluding observations and engage directly with the Committee during its consideration of national reports.

This event aims to allow the Committee to engage with and learn from civil society and its experiences, to ascertain the relevance of the Committee's work on the ground thus far, and to uncover how it can be improved and enhanced in order to prevent racial discrimination within State parties.

2. Focus and Objectives

The objective of the consultation is to explore new and innovative ways for the Committee to work with Civil Society organizations to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. The afternoon will include discussions on three guiding questions outlined below, exploring the key challenges of racial discrimination today and responses by civil society to combat these, engagement to date by civil society with CERD and suggestions regarding enhancing its work on racial discrimination in order to strengthen the impact of its recommendations on the ground.

3. Date and Venue

The consultation will take place on 23 November 2016 at the Palais des Nations, Conference Room XX, from 15:00 to 18:00 hrs.

4. Methodology

The forum will consist of two panel presentations by civil society representatives, each followed by questions, comments and discussions with participants. Each panel will be made up of three experts. Panel One will focus on question one which explores key issues identified and challenges faced by civil society around the world in combatting racial discrimination. Panel Two will focus on questions two and three, exploring civil society experiences in engaging with CERD and ideas to improve and enhance the engagement and work of the Committee on racial discrimination.

Prior to the consultation, civil society organizations are invited to submit written responses to the questions outlined below. **Written responses should not exceed 3300 words and should be submitted** via email to cerd@ohchr.org by **14 November 2016**. In some cases, civil society organizations may be facilitated to participate in this event via video submissions which will be viewed during the discussions.

Questions:

1. What are the key challenges and issues of racial discrimination in your country/region today and how do you work to address them?
2. What has been your experience, as civil society, of engaging with CERD to date?
3. How can the CERD improve and enhance its engagement with civil society, and its work on racial discrimination for greater impact on the ground?

5. Participants

The Committee invites civil society organizations, as well as, national human rights institutions and independent national mechanisms that address racial discrimination to participate in the event. Other participants will include OHCHR staff working in this thematic area, and ICERD experts.

6. Outcome

The Consultation will enhance the Committee's understanding of key racial discrimination issues and challenges in States today. It will also result in concrete suggestions for the Committee on how to improve its engagement with civil society and to increase its impact on the most pressing issues of racial discrimination. By bringing together the Committee and civil society, the event will also strengthen collaborative efforts to implement the Convention.

7. Accreditation

Please fill out the registration form available on the website (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CERD/Pages/Accreditation.aspx>) and send it to the Secretariat by email: cerd@ohchr.org by latest 16 November 2016.

For further information, please contact the Secretariat of the Committee at: cerd@ohchr.org.