



# International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 117th session

### Summary record of the 3196th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 13 April 2026, at 10 a.m.

*Temporary Chair:* Ms. Lee (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)

*Chair:* Mr. Kut

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Opening of the session**

1. **The Temporary Chair** declared open the 117th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

2. She said that, in recent remarks to the Human Rights Council, the Secretary-General had warned that human rights were under full-scale attack around the world; that the rule of law was being outmuscled by the rule of force; and that the assault was happening in plain sight and was often led by those who held the greatest power. Human rights were being pushed back deliberately, strategically and sometimes proudly, with devastating consequences. On International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Secretary-General had also recognized that racism was a driver of many of the world's problems, from economic, social and political inequality to discriminatory policies and practices and outright conflicts. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the same occasion, had observed that race remained the most common ground for discrimination globally, causing real pain to millions of people. Every year, events around the world reminded the Committee of the critical importance of its work.

3. It was 25 years since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which provided a key global framework, complementary to the Convention, for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, the distance between the commitments made in Durban and lived realities remained too wide and too painful for far too many people. Racial discrimination was a living, breathing injustice, present in courtrooms and classrooms, in hiring decisions and in hospital wards, and was increasingly fuelled by algorithms that sorted human beings and by political speeches that scapegoated them. It was also present in the silence of those who treated anti-racism as a rhetorical commitment rather than a governing priority.

4. The reviews conducted by the Committee provided an invaluable opportunity to address the gap between word and deed and to insist that the commitments made by States Parties under the Convention were not mere aspirations but legal obligations that must be fulfilled. The Committee had taken a leading role in recommending that States adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law as part of its efforts to guide them in effectively implementing the Convention. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had made following up on those recommendations a core goal of its programming work for the period 2024–2027.

5. The development by the Committee of a general recommendation on reparations was a landmark undertaking. On 25 March 2026, at an event to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, participants had highlighted the need to step up efforts for reparatory justice. Also in March, the General Assembly had passed a resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans as “the gravest crime against humanity” – a move advocates hoped would pave the way for healing and justice.

6. The United Nations had intensified its focus on Indigenous Peoples' rights, climate justice and participation in global policymaking. On 15 December 2025, the General Assembly had adopted its annual resolution on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, which set in motion preparations for major upcoming events, including the organization of a high-level panel in 2027 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and preliminary consultations for a possible second world conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2028. In the same resolution, the General Assembly called on States to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and to respect the principle of no contact, where applicable.

7. Some progress had been made by States that were investing in equality bodies, implementing national action plans, reforming discriminatory legislation and launching national consultations with affected communities, among other initiatives. Such efforts, often pursued through constructive engagement with the Committee, were the building blocks of the world envisioned in the Convention. Many States continued to demonstrate genuine

commitment by submitting their reports, following the Committee's recommendations and taking tangible steps to strengthen their legal frameworks and institutional responses to racial discrimination.

8. In a world where the foundations of the international human rights system were being tested as rarely before, the Committee was striving to meet the challenges of the times. On 24 December 2025, it had issued a press release in which it called on all States Parties to take concrete action in line with its conclusions on the inter-State communication *State of Palestine v. Israel* and to support the implementation of its recommendations. The Committee had underscored, in addition to the specific responsibilities of Israel, the obligation for all States Parties to ensure that their policies, cooperation and assistance related to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory did not enable or support discriminatory policies or practices. Furthermore, in March 2026, acting under its early warning and urgent action procedure, the Committee had adopted a decision on the United States of America in which it expressed grave concern over the discriminatory impacts of immigration enforcement policies since January 2025 and called upon the United States to bring its legislative and policy frameworks into full conformity with the Convention.

9. Although their work had never been more essential, the treaty bodies continued to face unprecedented constraints. In 2025, more than 30% of meeting time had been lost owing to the United Nations liquidity crisis, which, together with the reduction in staff support, significantly limited the amount of work that could be undertaken. At the same time, the submission of fewer State Party reports had led to the reduction of budgeted resources for the treaty bodies under the formula established in General Assembly resolution 68/268. In 2026, OHCHR expected the resource situation to remain extremely challenging, as it would have to contend with additional cuts to posts and non-post resources. It had not yet been confirmed whether the Committee's second session of the year would go ahead. Continuing reductions in meeting time would result in less work undertaken by the Committee and, regrettably, less impact for right holders, while also creating difficulties for States Parties, civil society, national human rights institutions and all partners who relied on the Committee's work.

10. The High Commissioner had warned that, if resources continued to dwindle, the treaty body system risked reaching a breaking point. In addition to highlighting the need to close resource gaps, he had called on Members States, treaty bodies, civil society organizations and other concerned parties to pursue innovative solutions, including in the context of the UN80 Initiative, to make the treaty body system more sustainable and impactful. OHCHR was doing its utmost to support the Committee and other treaty bodies, not least by highlighting, at every opportunity, the direct negative impact that resource limitations were having for human rights protection on the ground.

#### **Solemn declaration by the newly elected members of the Committee under rule 16 of the rules of procedure**

11. In accordance with rule 16 of the rules of procedure, Ms. Ali Al-Misnad, Ms. Pousa Caride and Mr. Vicente Vázquez made the following solemn declaration: "I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

#### **Election of members of the Bureau, in accordance with rule 17 of the rules of procedure**

12. **The Temporary Chair** said that the Committee would proceed to elect from among its members a Chair, three Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur, who would constitute its Bureau. According to the established practice, the election of the Chair followed the principle of regional rotation, and it was the turn of the Group of Western European and other States to nominate the Chair for the subsequent two years. She therefore invited the members representing Western European and other States to nominate candidates for the office of Chair.

13. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that, during informal consultations, the members from Western European and other States had proposed an arrangement whereby Mr. Kut would serve the first year of the two-year term and she, Ms. Stavrinaki, would serve the second. Such an arrangement would be a demonstration of collegiality, synergy and shared experience. On that understanding, she nominated Mr. Kut for the office of Chair.

14. **Ms. Esseneme** said that a proposal had been made for the two members from Western European and other States to chair the Committee on an alternating basis. The members representing African States had discussed that proposal and considered that it was not in line with rule 18 of the Committee's rules of procedure, which provided for Bureau members to be elected for a term of two years. No justification had been given for the office of Chair to be held by different members in successive years, while the other Bureau members would serve two-year terms.

15. **The Temporary Chair** suggested that the Committee should hold a brief informal consultation so that the members could confirm their nominations.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.*

16. **The Temporary Chair** said that, according to rule 22 of the rules of procedure, if any member of the Bureau for any reason was no longer able to act as such, a new member of the Bureau would be appointed as soon as possible for the unexpired term by the members of the Committee from the same regional group as his or her predecessor, and that appointment must be endorsed by the Committee. With that clarification, she took it that the Committee wished to proceed with the election of the Chair for the term of office foreseen in rule 18.

17. *It was so decided.*

18. **Ms. Chung, Ms. Tlakula and Ms. Esseneme** seconded the nomination of Mr. Kut for the office of Chair.

19. *Mr. Kut was elected Chair by acclamation.*

20. **The Temporary Chair** invited Committee members to nominate candidates for the three posts of Vice-Chair and the office of Rapporteur.

21. **Mr. Kut** nominated Mr. Balcerzak for the office of Vice-Chair.

22. **Ms. Esseneme** nominated Mr. Guissé for the office of Vice-Chair.

23. **Ms. Chung** nominated Mr. Guan for the office of Vice-Chair.

24. *Mr. Balcerzak, Mr. Guan and Mr. Guissé were elected Vice-Chairs by acclamation.*

25. **Ms. Shepherd** nominated Ms. Pousa Caride for the office of Rapporteur.

26. *Ms. Pousa Caride was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

27. *Mr. Kut took the Chair.*

28. **The Chair** said that the United Nations system was experiencing a period of tremendous difficulty, which would make the Committee's work even more challenging. As a member since 2010, he had always believed in addressing challenges in an incremental fashion and then, in time, turning back to consider what had been achieved. Under his leadership, the Committee would maintain that approach, which although imperfect, was effective. Eliminating racial discrimination altogether was an idealistic goal that might never be achieved; however, the Committee would constantly combat it, and would assist States Parties in their efforts to do likewise.

#### **Adoption of the agenda (CERD/C/117/1)**

29. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she proposed to include on the agenda an additional item, namely the ongoing work within the United Nations to elaborate and conclude a legally binding instrument on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity, and the Committee's engagement with that process.

30. **The Chair** said that the Committee would try to find a way to include discussion of that issue in its programme of work.

31. *The agenda was adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.*