



13. Anti-Racism Initiative: An International Commission of Inquiry on Racism and Discriminatory Policies and Practices

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Racism, in its many expressions including multiple practices of discrimination, is globally ubiquitous and stubbornly persistent. While we recognize the day-to-day impact of individual acts of racism, the G20 processes offer the potential to engage systemic and structural racism with a view to bold action. This deserves an explicit priority because of racism's grave social, ethical, economic, legal, political, and religious and spiritual impacts. The wide and interconnected impact of racism and racial prejudice for all Sustainable Development Goals and targets as well as, more immediately, the multifaceted COVID-19 emergencies, argues for action by the G20 to take on anti-racism as a central and continuing agenda focus.

The G20 Interfaith Forum, through its Anti-Racism Initiative and its other policy work, is committed to confronting racism in all its forms, with the aspiration of supporting actions that eradicate it. Healing, reconciliation, and equity are unachievable without attending to that goal. This call to action reflects a continuation of efforts throughout history to engage racism, discrimination and injustice.

The G20 Interfaith Forum recommends that, to establish a solid analytic foundation for continuing action, the G20 establish an International Commission on Racism. The goals of such a Commission would be:

- To give central prominence to an underlying issue that in differing forms affects each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in both nations and international relations, and to task the G20 leaders with responsibility to act.
- To assemble a tightly organized, multidisciplinary group of respected states people, scholars, interreligious leaders, and experts for gathering the considerable collective wisdom that exists on positive action paths.
- To set out in a widely promulgated document specific principles and proposals that will spur appropriate and urgent action. Such action could include removing racist language and racist legislation that may still exist, as well developing antiracist legislation.

Racism in its Multifaceted Forms is the Crisis of Crises

Racial injustice permeates the many crises that threaten humanity. It is a common thread that, if root causes are left unaddressed, threatens the legitimacy of the international order. Racist practices influence policies and structures that undermine international cooperation in vaccine distribution, food security, and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Efforts that address racial injustice reinforce the stabilization of the international order and promote economic development.

Contributions of Interfaith Organizations and Communities

Interfaith organizations recognize the importance of commissions of the kind that we are proposing. Although commissions can be imperfect, they provide a principled way of opening up necessary conversations and facing with honesty and courage some of the challenges we face in the world. There are historical examples of such commissions in recent history and in several regions of the world, including several in G20 member states. While religious communities have at times been part of the problem, they can also be part of the solution. As religious communities begin to reclaim their spiritual roots as distinct from their institutional constructs, they may more effectively speak for the needs and aspirations of the over 80% of the human community who have a religious affiliation. The antidote for racism is to accept and embrace the full humanity of every person. This includes the sacredness of human conscience and the full dignity and access to all human rights which are inherent in the world's religious and spiritual traditions. These religious attributes require legal protection and promotion to achieve a culture of respect for human beings.

Recommendation

To achieve peace among cultures and peace among religions, it is our conviction that the scourge of racism must be addressed. We believe the background and arguments above to present a compelling case.

We therefore recommend the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry with members from the G20 (the 19 nations and the European Union). We acknowledge that Commissions of Inquiry of many sorts have a rich history with mixed results. While a Commission of Inquiry's findings and recommendations are not binding, they significantly influence public opinion, shape public policy, and promote healing.

The IF20 urges the leaders of the G20 to consider this recommendation and pledge to commit its considerable networks and resources to its realization.