



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies

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UN Anti-Racism Documents Released

The United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) welcomes the public release (www.unhchr.ch) of the Final Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR). As a participating non-governmental organization (NGO) at WCAR in Durban and its parallel events – the International Youth Summit and the NGO Forum – UNA-Canada is pleased that the concerted work of governments and NGOs has resulted in documents setting high global standards for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

Governments agreed to declare slavery a crime against humanity, and in the conference's final hours consensus was reached on language referring to issues arising from the Middle East conflict. The documents recognized the need to enhance anti-racism education and to involve youth in the development of national policies to fight racism.

“The documents’ language on the importance of youth involvement and human rights education in preventing racism is particularly encouraging,” says Executive Director Steve Mason. UNA-Canada focused its involvement in Durban on promoting the role of education and youth engagement in the fight against racism. After mobilizing young people across Canada through a series of forums to produce a ‘for youth, by youth’ anti-racism education model, UNA-Canada presented this unique process and its outcomes to other youth, NGOs, and governments in Durban. UNA-Canada was actively involved in the International Youth Summit, where delegates lobbied for a paragraph on peer education, previously unaddressed in the Summit’s statement, to be included in the Final Declaration and Plan of Action. “This paragraph expresses the need for governments to provide safe spaces for youth to engage in dialogue to address racism,” says Mason.

The NGO Forum, held from August 28 to September 1 in Durban, enabled victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance to define their own experiences and record these in the final NGO documents. UNA-Canada supports the principle behind this process, but condemns the use of language in parts of the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action that is anti-Semitic, distorted, and inflammatory.

UNA-Canada believes that the UN documents adopted by governments now need to be reinforced through implementation by – and in – the signatory countries, including Canada, as well as through the establishment of a five-year progress and accountability review. “We sincerely hope that the late release of these documents does not reflect a reluctance on the part of some governments to implement them and initiate a follow-up process,” says Mason.

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