



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations
and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council
Debate in commemoration of the International Day for the
Elimination of Racial Discrimination:
*The urgency of combating racism and racial discrimination
75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
29 March 2023*

Mister President,

As this year marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is fitting that this Council take stock of the progress made and challenges facing the elimination of racial discrimination as well as its effect on the promotion and protection of human rights.

While progress has undoubtedly been made in international efforts to eliminate discrimination of all kinds, it is disheartening to see how many instances of racial profiling and discrimination still exist, despite national and international protection mechanisms. These “[i]nstances of racism continue to shame us, for they show that our supposed social progress is not as real or definitive as we think.”¹ Far worse than the Covid-19 pandemic, “[r]acism is a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding, and lurks in waiting.”²

Sadly, along various migratory routes we have seen instances of racial discrimination with both migrants and refugees, at times, being treated unfairly by border patrol officials, humanitarian aid organizations and host communities. In this way, these individuals, many of which are already suffering the hardship of war, also face discrimination due to the colour of their skin. Needless to say, refugees ought to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated into their host communities, regardless of their race, sex, country of origin, culture or religion and should never be treated as a burden.

Mister President,

The Holy See is particularly concerned about a new and subtle form of discrimination often related to race and especially traditional culture, a phenomenon which Pope Francis has denounced as ideological colonization. Rather than respecting the values and cultures of local populations, certain Western countries impose their ideologies on countries from the Global South, at times withholding financial support and humanitarian aid unless that country adopt and implement their positions. While authentic dialogue about values and differing perspectives should always be welcomed, no country should ever be forced to choose between abandoning its own values or refusing international support, which is necessary for the promotion of the common good in developing countries.

Thank you, Mister President.

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, n. 20.

² *Ibid.*, n. 97.