

UN General Assembly adopts US-led resolution on safe, secure and trustworthy AI

Source copy kept by wheresthe.ai for the story "UN General Assembly adopts US-led resolution on safe, secure and trustworthy AI" (<https://wheresthe.ai/d/intl-unga-safe-trustworthy-ai-resolution-2024-03/>).

Source: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12588.doc.htm>

Text saved 18 Oct 2026 (the page text through a reader, because the site refused a direct fetch).

SHA-256 of the saved text: 6c9bf341423dae5dbaec4557d494cd8626a364b9763c77420c6ffca9c6c9de79

Adopting a landmark resolution on steering the use of artificial intelligence towards global good, the General Assembly today also stressed the importance of addressing racial discrimination around the world, including through reparations.

By the terms of the resolution titled "Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure, and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development" (document A/78/L.49), which it adopted without a vote, the Assembly resolved to bridge the artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital divides between and within countries and promote safe, secure and trustworthy AI systems to accelerate progress towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Introducing that text, the representative of the United States noted the many existential challenges posed by artificial intelligence. The international community must "govern this technology rather than have it govern us", she said. In a year when more than half of the world's population will elect their leaders, AI-generated content holds the potential to undercut the integrity of political debates. However, it also holds profound opportunities to accelerate work, end poverty, save lives, protect the planet and create a more equitable world.

The technology is already being used, she added, to detect and diagnose disease earlier and more accurately; it is helping scientists better predict earthquakes, floods and hurricanes; and it is allowing vulnerable communities to prepare for and respond to natural disasters. "Simply put, AI is proving to be an engine for us all to make up lost ground and even meet the Sustainable Development Goals," she said. Her country engaged with over 120 countries to craft a text that cements a global consensus, she said, adding that it is crucial to ensure that no Government or other actors can use AI to undermine peace and human rights.

The Assembly also observed the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which falls on 21 March every year. Assembly President Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago) said that this annual commemoration is an opportunity to stand up alongside those who continue to fight racism and racial discrimination around the world. Millions worldwide still endure various forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Noting this year's theme — A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent — he praised the adoption of national action plans against racism and recognition of the rights of people of African descent in national constitutions. Looking forward to next week's observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, he stressed the importance of reparatory justice.

Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, speaking on behalf of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, reflected that racism impacts communities differently. This year's theme recognizes that people of African descent face a unique history of systemic and institutionalized racism and profound challenges. Member States must build on the tireless advocacy of people of African descent — from Governments advancing policies to eliminate racism to technology firms urgently addressing racial bias in artificial intelligence. "Let's commit to work together to build a world of dignity, justice and equal opportunity for every community everywhere," he stressed.

Speaking on his own behalf, he recalled that 60 years ago today, 69 people were killed and many injured when South African police opened fire on peaceful protesters in Sharpeville — courageous individuals demonstrating against the laws "which stood at the rotten heart of the Apartheid system." He called on States to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Countries responsible for the transatlantic slave trade must have the moral courage to deliver reparatory justice, including restitution where appropriate, and businesses that profited from the trade in human souls should also consider the case for reparations, he said.

Uganda's representative, speaking for the African Group, expressed regret that there have been no comprehensive reparations to date for all the harm suffered by people of African descent. In December 2022, she said, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted its first resolution on Africa's reparations agenda and the human rights of Africans in the diaspora and people of African descent worldwide. The Commission called on States to create a committee to conceptualize reparations from Africa's perspective, describe the harm occasioned by the tragedies of the past and establish a case for reparations for Africa's claim.

Some Governments have taken initiatives to apologize and redress past legacies, she noted, calling for more positive and affirmative actions, including the return of stolen assets and economic development programmes. Colonialism and enslavement of Africans continues to reverberate through poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity. Highlighting the importance of debt relief, poverty eradication and transfer of technology, including digital technologies, she said: "Building a future of justice requires mending an unjust past."

Echoing that, Verene Albertha Shepherd, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, also called on States which colonized and underdeveloped Africa and the Americas, including the Caribbean, to respond to calls for reparatory justice and economic empowerment for people of African descent. Pointing to how racist hate speech and racially motivated violence are "continuing to rear their ugly heads", she cited the words of Jamaican reggae icons Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, and affirmed that many people are crying out for both peace and justice. "To speak the names of the ancestors is to make them live again and influence our actions today," she said.

Haiti's representative, speaking for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), lamented "an unjust world, one seemingly not governed by any sense of international morality, with global values being increasingly tradable and transactional." Systematic discrimination persists in trade, access to development, climate and concessional financing, debt relief, technology transfer and health care — often crippling the development of the world's most vulnerable countries. Calling for "a definitive levelling of the playing field", he urged the international community to address the issue of limited resources, particularly funding for the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

Speakers also acknowledged the many achievements of the International Decade for People of African Descent. Ilze Brand Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, said the Decade has facilitated dialogue on addressing systemic racism experienced by people of African descent globally. It has prompted States to adopt legal frameworks to combat racial discrimination in political participation, housing and interactions with law enforcement, among others. The Decade has also been a celebration of the contributions of people of African descent, she said, adding that their resilience to centuries of racist oppression must inspire the international community. This last year of the Decade is an opportunity to take stock and change course where needed.

June Soomer, Chair-designate of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, said the Forum's establishment was a crucial achievement of the Decade. At the same time, the Decade calls for action and accountability. Marcus Garvey, she recalled, in his 1920 "Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World", condemned the discrimination that denies the rights of people on no other basis than their race and colour. Over 100 years later, this remains true, she said, adding: "There is not a place in this world where discrimination does not occur against people of African descent." While the Decade helped realize meaningful change, including awareness-raising and national legislative frameworks, addressing the historic injustice of colonialism, slavery and apartheid means dismantling structural barriers and ensuring equitable access to education, health and employment.

Uché Blackstock, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Advancing Health Equity, shared her experience as a doctor and the daughter of a doctor to draw attention to the impact of racism on health and health care. Her organization works with health-care organizations to dismantle racism in medicine. As a Black woman of African descent, she is still five times more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications than her white peers in the United States, she said, while Black infants are more than twice as likely to die in their first year of life than white infants — a larger gap than 15 years before the end of slavery. All health professionals should be trained in culturally responsive care and to recognize their own internal biases and racism, she said, adding: "But we need to act swiftly, as it is a matter of life and death."

The representative of the United States, the host country, also shared her personal story, recalling that the first bus boycott of the Civil Rights era took place in Baton Rouge in her home state of Louisiana. She was a few

months old at the time, she said, adding that her neighbours' collective action reshaped the trajectory of Black lives around the country. Stressing the importance of tackling not only lingering systemic racism but also intergenerational trauma, she said it is vital to reflect on policies that deprived Native Americans of their sovereignty, while combating the rise of anti-Asian hate, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric. "While this work may begin at home, I also know the United States isn't an outlier," she said, expressing solidarity with the millions of descendants of enslaved people around the world.

Belgium's delegate, speaking for the European Union, said that racial discrimination runs counter to freedom, equality and democracy, the values that "our European Union has been built upon". However, he acknowledged, a recent report by the Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights reveals distressing reports of such discrimination in the Union's territories. "Our work needs to start at home," he said. Also noting that 2 billion voters are set to go to the polls this year, he said comprehensive efforts are required to safeguard voting rights, ensure representation and access, and fight hate speech on the campaign trail.

Along similar lines, the representative of Germany, speaking for the Western European and Other States Group, condemned all forms of racism and intolerance, and stressed the need to also address stereotyping, and stigmatization, as well as all forms of racist harassment, hate speech and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence — online or offline. Urging the international community to dismantle the still-prevailing societal structures that perpetuate systemic racism, she called for full and effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. She further noted the role of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in monitoring that implementation, looking forward to participating in the third session of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent in 2024.

Bahrain's delegate, speaking for the Asia-Pacific Group, noted that hundreds of millions of people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in other parts of the world outside the African continent — including in his region. He expressed alarm at the global rise in hate speech, calling for concrete action to mobilize national, regional and international efforts to address all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. He further reiterated the importance of fully implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Guatemala's representative, speaking for the Latin American and Caribbean States, stressed: "We still have work to do." While racial injustice has changed in form, it continues to be perpetuated, she said, expressing alarm about the rise of white supremacy and other forms of extremism around the world. The persistent spread of such ideas points to the need to fully implement the Durban Declaration. The international community cannot afford to allow such scourges to continue to grow, she cautioned, adding that humanity already knows what can happen when such dangerous ideologies are not checked. Further, the protection of all human rights is fundamental, she said, noting how discrimination intersects with the rights of migrants and refugees, Indigenous people, women and girls.

The Assembly also adopted a text (document A/78/L.47) proclaiming 2025 the International Year of Peace and Trust and calling upon the international community to resolve conflicts through inclusive dialogue and negotiation in order to ensure the strengthening of peace and trust in relations between Member States. Introducing that text, the speaker for Turkmenistan said the world currently faces a trust deficit. As a neutral country, Turkmenistan is committed to ensuring dialogue on critical issues, as well as preventive diplomacy and trust-building. Stressing the importance of non-confrontational diplomacy, she said it is vital to unlock opportunities for mutual understanding. The adoption of this text will reaffirm the international community's commitment to peaceful settlement of disputes, she said.

By another text (document A/78/L.45), the Assembly declared 15 November the International Day for the Prevention of and Fight Against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime in order to raise awareness of the threats posed by such crime and to enhance international cooperation in this regard. That text was introduced by the representative of Italy, on behalf of a number of countries, who pointed out that the designation of 15 November recalls the adoption of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (also known as the Palermo Convention) on 15 November 2000.

The date "reminds us of our collective commitment to uphold the principles enshrined in the Convention", he stated. The International Day is also a solemn occasion to pay tribute to the victims of transnational organized crime, including the brave public servants who have dedicated their lives to the cause. The proclamation is not merely symbolic, but "a tangible manifestation of our unity in confronting the scourge of transnational organized crime with unwavering determination", he stressed.

In other business, the Assembly also approved the exceptional extension of the term of Gilles Michaud of Canada as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security by two years, until 30 June 2026. Further, it appointed Brazil, Finland, the Russian Federation, Senegal, South Sudan and the United States as members of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, for a term beginning on 21 March 2024 and ending on 20 March 2026.