

**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA)**

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**2199. Mr M Nyhontso (PAC) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**:

1. With reference to the Republic’s successful hosting of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerance in Durban on 30 July 2021, and the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaiming 2015 – 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) through resolution 68/237, what steps has the Government taken in promoting and implementing IDPAD in the Republic;
2. (a) what steps has the Government taken to promote IDPAD in the structures and programmes of the (i) African Union and (ii) Southern African Development Community and (b) has she found that the specified steps had any impact on the continent;
3. Whether her department has taken any steps to promote IDPAD amongst the African Diaspora; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
4. Whether, in view of the Caribbean Community and Common Market using IDPAD to call for African Reparations; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
5. Whether the Government will provide (a) country reports submitted to the United Nations on IDPAD and (b) the date of submission of each specified report; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details? **NW2500E**

**REPLY:**

1. From the time South Africa successfully hosted the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban in 2001, our country has been in the forefront, particularly at the continental and multilateral/global levels to ensure that the outcomes of the Durban Conference are not only promoted, but are implemented by all countries around the world. It is important to note that the global anti-racism agenda and its programmes (such as the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD)) face incredible opposition from major powers, institutions and interest groups. Despite these challenges, South Africa has managed, working with our partners on the African continent and in the Diaspora, to still register some achievements and successes in the fight against racism and in pursuit of the goal to promote and implement the outcomes of the WCAR. The following are examples of how South Africa played a key role (despite the opposition from other countries and organisations) in promoting and implementing the outcomes of the WCAR in general and the IDPAD in particular:
2. the adoption of resolution 68/237 by the UNGA and the actual declaration of 2015-2024 as the IDPAD with the objective, inter alia, of (a) reinforcing the actions and measures aimed at securing the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of people of African Descent, and their full and equal participation in society; (b) providing an operational framework for the eradication of current and historical social injustices and work towards eradication of racial prejudices and discrimination that people of African descent still experience; and (c) contributing to a greater knowledge, appreciation and respect for people of African descent and their contribution to the economic, social, intellectual, cultural and ethical development of humanity;
3. the creation of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and programme of Action that meets annually in Geneva;
4. the creation of a dedicated thematic Special Procedure Mechanism of the Human Rights Council for people of African descent called the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent;
5. the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards whose mandate is to “elaborate, as a matter of priority and necessity, complementary standards in the form of either a convention or additional protocol(s) to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, filling the existing gaps in the Convention, and also providing new normative standards aimed at combating all forms of contemporary racism, including incitement to racial and religious hatred”;
6. the resolutions that South Africa and the Africa Group (in Geneva), pioneered, which resolutions sought to focus the world’s attention on the plight of African-Americans in the US and Africans and people of African descent in other countries following the murder of George Floyd on Africa Day (25 May) 2020;
7. the follow-up resolution that South Africa sought to place before the Human Rights Council that sought further to demonstrate the need for the rights of people of African descent to be respected and protected (this was in the aftermath of the killing of Lindani Myeni (a South African) by the Honolulu police in the US);
8. in 2012, South Africa hosted the Global African Diaspora summit in Sandton, Johannesburg and adopted a Programme of Action, which, inter alia, committed African and Diaspora leaders to “leverage the collective efforts of the African Union and all its inter-governmental entities in regions in which African Diaspora populations are part of to promote and advance issues of critical importance to Africa and its Diaspora;
9. the role that South Africa played (through the Presidency and the Ministry/Department of International Relations and Cooperation) in raising awareness and drumming up support for the special commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the WCAR as evidenced by: (a) South Africa lobbying for support and actually obtaining it from the Human Rights Council (HRC) and other partners during the HRC Session in February 2020; (c) the keynote address by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the special meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN in February 2021 on the theme: “Reimagining equality: Eliminating racism, xenophobia and discrimination for all in the decade of action for the SDGs”; as well as (d) the holding of the webinar jointly organised by DIRCO and the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation at the University of Johannesburg in July 2021; and
10. the speech by President Ramaphosa at the 20th anniversary of the WCAR during the UNGA in September 2021 wherein he, among other important issues, called for reparations for the victims of slave trade.

(2) In all the programmes, resolutions and initiatives aimed at promoting and implementing the outcomes and follow-ups of the WCAR and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), South Africa has always sought to cooperate with the African Union and the structures that pursue the interests of the Union (such as the Africa Group in Geneva and New York). The resolutions that South Africa has led on and championed in the Human Rights Council in Geneva (such as the so-called George Floyd resolution) were promoted and adopted with the full support of the Africa Group. During South Africa’s chairship of the AU (2020), South Africa and President Ramaphosa in particular played a key role in leading the continent and galvanising global support for Africa’s capacity to respond to covid-19. In his engagements with partners across the world, President Ramaphosa underscored the need for Africa, the Africa Diaspora, and people of African descent in general to be given due consideration in all programmes aimed at fighting covid-19 since it was this group of people who find themselves on the receiving end of poverty, inequality, and other forms of social injustices. In working with the AU and other structures such as the Africa Group, the countries of SADC are/were always included.

Notwithstanding the challenges South Africa has experienced and continues to encounter in our fight against racism and the recognition and respect for the rights of people of African descent, in the programmes that South Africa has led on e.g. on human rights of people of African descent and access to vaccines that prioritised the interests of people of African descent, South Africa has registered great successes (see discussion above).

(3) There is a lot of work that still needs to be done to promote IDPAD in South Africa, on the continent and in the African diaspora and South Africa should continue to take the lead in this regard. The previous summits, conferences and meeting organised and hosted by South Africa as well as resolutions and decisions championed by South Africa at multilateral fora focusing on issues of interest to people of African descent bear testimony to our commitment not only to promote IDPAD but to ensure that resolutions, actions and programmes aimed to benefit people of African descent are implemented. As a way of deepening cooperation between South Africa and CARICOM countries, South Africa had contemplated the possibility of building a complex in Pretoria that would house the diplomatic missions of countries in the CARICOM, but because of financial constraints, this project could not take off the ground.

(4) South Africa was instrumental in the formulation of the theme of the 20th anniversary of the Durban anti-racism conference, which was “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent”. The calls for reparations and for social justice for people of African descent, particularly victims of the (trans-Atlantic) slave trade are always met with great opposition from a number of countries, particularly some western countries and some of their social partners (NGOs). Notwithstanding this, South Africa, the AU, CARICOM countries and other partners in the Diaspora have managed to keep the flame of reparations burning. The Africa-CARICOM Summit on 07 September 2021 called for a collective commitment of Africa-CARICOM Member States to fully participate in the High Level meeting of the UN General Assembly commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the DDPA on 22nd September, 2021and use the event to advance the claim for reparations within the process of the UN.

For instance, President Ramaphosa at the 20th commemoration of the WCAR in September 2021 called for reparations for the victims of the slave trade. On 7 September 2021, South Africa under the leadership of President Ramaphosa participated in the inaugural CARICOM-Africa Summit hosted virtually by Kenya under the theme, “Unity Across Continents and Oceans: Opportunities for Deepening Integration.” Working with its partners on the African continent and in the CARICOM, South Africa is committed to implementing the outcomes of that important summit.

(5) South Africa does not have reporting obligations to the UN on IDPAD. Any reports in connection with IDPAD would ordinarily be the responsibility of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent which is currently chaired by Ms Dominique Day (US citizen) and the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent which was launched in August 2021. Ordinarily, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent would prepare its own report which would also be submitted to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The latter would report on the work done in respect of the IDPAC in her report to the HRC.