



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of
Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2008**

Almost 50 years after the “Sharpeville massacre” committed on 21 March 1960, the message of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is as pertinent as ever. Racism, xenophobia, and discrimination are still a problem and worldwide action against them remains the joint responsibility of the international community.

The EU strongly condemns all forms of intolerance, racism, and racial and other discrimination. Based on the principle that all human beings are born free and are equal in dignity and rights, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits discrimination based on any grounds, including sex, race or colour, origin, religion or belief, personal opinion, or sexual orientation.

On this occasion the EU would like to call attention to its unwavering commitment to combating all forms of intolerance, racism, and racial and other discrimination, which is firmly based on the international human rights standards that underpin the fight against racism. The EU once again calls on all states that have not yet signed, ratified, and/or implemented the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, which is the core international legal instrument in this respect, to do so.

P R E S S

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In order to combat racism, xenophobia, and discrimination worldwide, the EU cooperates closely with all relevant international actors and in all relevant international forums, especially the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant civil society organisations.

The Council of Europe, which is engaged in combating racism at the European level, has established the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), whose tasks include the adoption of political recommendations for the governments of the member states. Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits all forms of discrimination resulting from acts of sovereign states. The European Court of Human Rights monitors compliance with these stipulations. Since 2006, an Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime has helped curb the spread of racism and xenophobia through computer systems.

In this context, the EU remains firmly committed to implementing the goals and objectives defined by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban/South Africa in 2001. The EU believes that the follow-up process to Durban provides an opportunity to renew these commitments and therefore must focus on strengthening the implementation of the commitments made in Durban.

Combating racism and xenophobia remains a global challenge that requires an equally global response. The EU urges all states to take effective action at the national, regional, and international levels to put an end to racism, xenophobia, discrimination and other forms of intolerance and confirms its willingness to work together with every country to oppose racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and other related forms of intolerance, irrespective of the place of occurrence.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

** Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*