

Remarks by the Executive Director, UN-Habitat

Event: Dialogue on Racism in the Workplace

Date: 3.12.2020

Mr. Youssoupha Niang, Regional Ombudsman, friends, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be part of what I consider a very critical meeting.

We all attend many meetings in the UN - but this dialogue on racism is extremely important and much needed.

Racism is something that affects us all, and in fact, we are all part of both the cause and the solution.

Racism may exist in our everyday lives.

It's an issue that we must consciously and consistently address, both in our own personal lives as well as in the workplace.

As the UN Secretary-General stressed clearly and repeatedly, "racism has no place in the United Nations."

At UN-Habitat, we have become more and more aware of the need for collaborative and collective action on racism.

We don't want quick fixes, but rather deep understanding and substantive change.

So far, we have:

1. In early June, formed a diverse task force who developed a racism survey that is made relevant for the UN-Habitat workforce and contexts;
2. On June 10th, I released a statement on racism and discrimination, condemning its ongoing prevalence, making a clear commitment to ensuring it is addressed within UN-Habitat and reiterating UN-Habitat's work for safe, resilient and inclusive cities and human settlements for all, free from racism and all forms of discrimination.
3. From the 1st-10th September, an organization wide survey on racism was implemented, covering all offices and the entire workforce of UN-Habitat: staff, consultants and interns;
4. From mid-September to end of October, a preliminary report was developed from the findings and shared with myself, the Deputy Executive Director and my advisors.
5. We are now currently seeking the services of an external consultant to verify and analyse the data to deepen the report and develop a set of recommendations. The consultant has been recommended by the UN Public Administration Division.
6. In early 2021, once this recommendations report is complete, we will start a process of discussing and implementing the proposed recommendations.

We take racism very seriously and will act accordingly on the recommendations proposed in the report.

We also look forward to working with other UN Agencies on this, to ensure a cross organisation engagement and reform process.

Thank you again, dear colleagues, for showing your support and driving the change to stop racism in our workplace.