

A Summary of the letter #IfNotNowWhen?

- Civil Society Organizations and Professors Across the World Call on the United Nations to Eliminate All Forms of Racial Discrimination Among as well as Within Countries and Usher a New Era of Sustainability

The letter addresses the United Nations (UN) and its Member States. It begins with a recognition of

the recent massive global protests against racism following the killing of George Floyd and during these extraordinary times of an ongoing pandemic, with escalating socio-economic inequalities within and between countries, our current climate emergency with mounting environmental challenges on the horizon, the urgent need to affirm our common humanity as well as for international cooperation towards social, economic and environmental sustainability

The letter calls for an end to systemic racism among as well as within countries.

In particular, it calls for an end to the domination of so-called developed countries of the Global North over so-called developing countries of the Global South. That is, the domination of European countries and former European settler-colonies, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which, together with Japan, belong to the so-called “developed world.”

This includes an end to the domination of countries of the Global North in all the major institutions of global governance – the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization. Moreover, the end of the domination of countries of the Global North in the global economy. An economy that largely is premised on the exploitation of human and natural resources in countries of the Global South in ways that are undermining life on earth, making it inhospitable to future generations and reproducing global hierarchies of dignity and rights.

The letter welcomes UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ statement in the 18th Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture on July 18, 2020 that colonialism is a primary historical source of inequality in the world and that the world needs another wave of decolonization.

Regarding the commitment of the international community to shift our world towards social, economic and environmental sustainability, the letter remarks that,

the colonial roots of much of the racial discrimination and inequities in the world as well as their institutional embeddedness in the makeup of nation-states, international relations and the distribution of resource-extraction, labor rights, production, consumption and profit in the global economy are not addressed by the SDGs [i.e. Sustainable Development Goals].

The letter recognizes that Global North countries and the international community never have taken steps to repair the damages of colonialism and asserts that our world “urgently needs international and domestic

“Hereby, we call on countries of the Global North and South to resolutely work together to end systemic racism among as well as within countries, including current legacies and continuations of historical injustices, and to repair our common humanity and natural world.”

From the letter, “If Not Now, When?”

“Recognizing that to shift the current course of development towards a new era of sustainability that replenishes rather than usurps life, affirms our symbiotic relationship to nature and the inherent dignity of all peoples and individuals without discrimination, it is critical that the international community resolutely abandons the philosophy that nature and people may be abused for our own material consumption and profit.”

From the letter, “If Not Now, When?”

processes of restorative justice as practiced by indigenous peoples across the world to restore our common humanity and the inherent dignity of all peoples” as well as “processes of reparatory justice for the historical and continuing injustices of colonialism. Not primarily as a matter of financial compensation nor as a matter of retribution, but as a matter of rectifying structural injustices.”

In view of this, the letter calls on the UN to *end racism in the international institutions of global governance*, including the UN, World Bank, IMF and WTO, by making them resolutely democratic and ending staff discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity and national origin; and also to *end racism among as well as within countries*, including in the global economy and the unequal enjoyment of human dignity and rights among peoples.

Towards these ends, the letter is requesting the UN to *mainstream racial equality and address systemic racism in the implementation of the sustainable development goals* and carefully consider adopting three new treaties for:

- 1) *Democratic, equitable and non-discriminatory governance and staffing of the UN, World Bank, IMF and WTO;*
- 2) *An equitable and non-discriminatory international economic order;*
- 3) *The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination among as well as within countries.*

The contents of these treaties as well as how to mainstream racial equality and address systemic racism in the implementation of the sustainable development goals is outlined in the letter.

For example, the letter states that the treaty for an equitable and non-discriminatory international economic order should include the responsibilities of States and their larger transnational corporations to ensure that labor rights and the sustainable use of natural resources are respected in every part of their production and supply chains.

Whereas, the treaty for elimination of all forms of racial discrimination among as well as within countries should include issues of international or global justice that are a result or continuation of historical racial injustices and inequities among peoples of the world, including such crimes against humanity as enslavement, native genocide, systemic racial segregation and subjugation.

“We deplore the manner in which countries of the Global North are holding countries of the Global South hostage at the UN by refusing to abide by its democratic will.

While noting that the racially stratified world order that was established by centuries of colonialism also is reflected in the governance structure of the World Bank and IMF.

Recalling that the governance systems of the World Bank and IMF are skewed towards the domination of the US, Europe and other countries of the Global North and the subordination of countries of the Global South, African countries in particular.”

From the letter, “If Not Now, When?”

“While bearing witness to the many global expressions of racism and their hindrance to the enjoyment of human rights and international cooperation, we resolutely assert that our world needs a new human rights paradigm, which emphasizes human rights protection against racial discrimination in international as well as domestic affairs.”

From the letter, “If Not Now, When?”