

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM



Intervention of

H.E. Ambassador Philippe KRIDELKA, Permanent Representative of
Belgium to the UN

**2021 ECOSOC SPECIAL MEETING
REIMAGINING EQUALITY: ELIMINATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND
DISCRIMINATION FOR ALL IN THE DECADE OF ACTION FOR THE SDG'S**

New York, 18 February 2021

Thank you Mister President.

Twenty years have passed since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. During the negotiations Belgium made every effort to build bridges. Yet, we cannot rest on our laurels. There is still much work to be done.

If we want to reach the goal of a society free from racism, we need to end inequalities. We firmly believe that every person has equal rights, is entitled to the same opportunities and deserves to be recognized and respected.

Regrettably, Belgium, like any other country, cannot claim to be free from racism. Belgium relies on a long-standing, comprehensive legal framework to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. But in itself, this is clearly not enough.

We need to win hearts and minds to challenge and end harmful prejudices. In a time of rising populism across the world, this is a formidable undertaking.

The task before us is one of challenging some of the social conventions that often were passed on for generations. We need to change old and harmful norms in order to defeat systemic racism.

In order to make a concerted effort in this direction, Belgium is elaborating an action plan against racism that commits all competent authorities. To that end, in September of last year, an interministerial conference defined the framework. As

we speak, technical working groups are elaborating actions in all fields shaping our society, such as education, media, housing or employment.

The overarching idea is to leave no-one behind. As we aspire to creating a fair, just and inclusive society, we need to ensure that no group is marginalized. Only by doing so, can we hope to break the vicious circle of further prejudice and marginalization.

The SDG's are indeed a very useful tool to measure our progress and a source of inspiration. The struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is linked to the moral duty to eliminate inequalities, but at the same time, it is imbedded in a bigger picture of achieving sustainable peace and prosperity in our societies.

Belgium therefore commits to continue mobilizing resources to advance towards a just and equitable society, free of discrimination on any ground, for current and coming generations.

I thank you Mister President.