

# UK Race & Europe **NETWORK**

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## Briefing Note n° 5

### Report on the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR): Governmental Conference, NGO Forum and Youth Summit

As you will recall from briefing notes 1 to 4, UKREN has been involved in preparations for the WCAR for the past two years. Part of these preparations consisted of a national consultation for UK NGOs, involving over 400 NGOs to discuss the issues of the WCAR and particularly those issues that were relevant to NGOs in the UK. This consultation, commissioned to UKREN by the Race Equality Unit at the Home Office, resulted in a report compiling the demands and recommendations of UK NGOs in relation to the WCAR which was then submitted to the government. Throughout the process, UKREN emphasised three key points:

- ✍ The importance of such an event where NGO participation would be unprecedented,
- ✍ The crucial role that NGOs could play and therefore the importance for NGOs to be informed and involved in the process at various levels,
- ✍ And last but not least, the importance of follow-up. The conference is now over, but the momentum needs to be kept up. We, as NGOs need to think about the follow-up action that needs to be taken at international, European and National level.

This briefing note is a succinct reference paper, with a few factual details on the outcome of the WCAR and tips on where to find the documents. As the final official documents of the WCAR are not available yet, it is difficult to act proactively at this stage.

However, a more exhaustive briefing note will be sent out at a later stage, providing more information on the outcome of the WCAR and especially how we can act upon this outcome. Please note that you can contact the UKREN co-ordinator in order to get hold of Briefing notes 1 to 4 which provides information on the preparatory process.

#### **The Youth Summit**

The event started with a two day Youth Summit where young people from around the world gathered to draft their own document to feed into the governmental final documents. The Youth Summit took place on 26 & 27 August and produced a Youth Declaration and Programme of Action. (These can be found on the following website: [www.racism.org.za](http://www.racism.org.za))

#### **The NGO Forum**

The NGO forum took place between 28 August and 1 September in Durban. The purpose of the NGO forum, other than bringing together several thousands representatives of NGOs worldwide, was to adopt a NGO Declaration and Programme of Action which would be presented to the Governmental Conference and more generally would serve as a reference document for lobbying and international strategies to fight racism. Briefing note 4 explains how the NGO Forum was to be organised. An NGO Document was adopted and presented to the WCAR Governmental delegates. (The NGO document can be found on the web at: [www.racism.org.za](http://www.racism.org.za) and/or [www.icare.to](http://www.icare.to))

#### **The Governmental Conference**

The Governmental Conference opened on 31 August. It was decided there that the Government representatives would continue the method introduced in Geneva during the PrepCom: two working groups would focus on the Declaration and the Programme of Action simultaneously; at the same time, contentious issues would be discussed by a smaller group which would submit proposals to the main group for adoption. Smaller groups were thus set up to discuss issues

pertaining to the Middle East situation, the issue of reparations (or "historical issues") and finally a third group was established to agree on a list of victims that would be used generically throughout the text. Negotiations on these issues ended the morning after the scheduled end of the Conference (Saturday morning) when a compromise was reached. All governmental delegates reconvened together and it was decided that the final governmental document would be made up of the following: the compromise texts on Middle East and Reparations, and all the rest of the text agreed in the two working groups (Declaration and Programme of Action). It was also agreed that all the remaining paragraphs of the texts, that is, those that were still ongoing in the negotiations and bracketed, would be dropped.

### **What is in the final Governmental document?**

At this stage, it is difficult to know what the final document will look like as it has not been officially been released. An unedited version is available (on [www.icare.to](http://www.icare.to) website; click on Documents on the left hand corner) which is by no means final and has yet to be adopted officially by the UN General Assembly in December.

Concerning the Middle East, the document refers to *"the plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation"* and recognises *"the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent state and recognise[s] the right to security for all States in the region, including Israel, and call[s] upon all States to support the peace process and bring it to an early conclusion"* (paragraph 6 of the unedited Declaration) Concerning Reparations and Slavery, the Declaration acknowledges that *"slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organised nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims and further acknowledge[s] that slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade."* (paragraph 13 of the unedited Declaration) In terms of the national action following the WCAR, the Programme of Action calls for the establishment of National Action Plans in each country to implement the provisions of the WCAR at national level.

### **What next?**

It is once again difficult to predict what the action at national level will be: the government is waiting to study the official documents before acting decisively. The Home Office indicated that it intends to fund and host a follow-up conference for NGOs in early 2002. At this meeting, it plans to present a draft National Action Plan (NAP) to NGOs for discussion. In the mean time, NGOs are invited to send concrete recommendations to the Home Office to feed into the NAP. (Race Equality Unit, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1A 9AT, 020 7273 4488) At European level, the Council of Europe, which had organised the European Conference Against Racism (ECAR) in preparation for the WCAR, intends to work actively on a follow-up structure at European level. In this respect, it will be crucial to read through the documents that came out of the ECAR, both governmental and NGO documents (available on [www.ecri.coe.int](http://www.ecri.coe.int)) as they are a good basis for lobbying and will be useful to draw up a European Action Plan. At international level, follow up has been given some attention, in particular by Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights, who has pushed for a follow-up mechanism at UN level.

#### Useful Websites:

##### **For general info on the WCAR:**

UN Website [www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch)

##### **For the NGO Declaration and Programme of Action and the Youth Declaration and Programme of Action:**

Sangoco (organisers of NGO Forum):  
[www.racism.org.za](http://www.racism.org.za)

##### **For General accounts of the WCAR and all the main documents:**

ICARE website [www.icare.to](http://www.icare.to)

##### **For ECAR (European Conference Against Racism) Documents:**

ECRI's website: [www.ecri.coe.int](http://www.ecri.coe.int)

For more information on UKREN and to get copies of Briefing Notes 1 to 4, please contact Sarah Isal

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