



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

**Remarks by
Mr. Leonard Zulu, UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative, OIC
On the Media Roundtable of the National Action Plan to Combat
Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance
(NAP)
South Africa
25 March 2019**

Honourable Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development,
Ambassador of the European Union,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great pleasure and honour to attend the official launch of the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (NAP) on behalf of the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

Following the adoption of the Durban Declaration in 2001 and the Programme of Action urging *“States to establish and implement without delay national policies and action plans to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including their gender-based manifestations,”* UNHCR congratulates the Republic of South Africa for developing a National Action Plan that will give effect to its international human rights obligations related to the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

As pointed out by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, government’s custodian charged with developing and implementing this initiative, *“The NAP does not belong to government only - it is a national undertaking and thus belongs to the country, involving all elements of government and society in relation to its implementation.”*

The NAP is indeed the ideal opportunity for South Africa and its peoples to renew commitment to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all other forms of prejudice and intolerance. South Africa belongs to all who live in it – united in our diversity.

After the xenophobic violence of 2008 and most recently in 2015, UNHCR takes this opportunity to commend the Government on its stance against a form and level of discrimination that has resulted in the loss of livelihoods, property and even life and limb. We are pleased to note therefore, that the ***“NAP will provide for monitoring on-going incidents of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through the establishment of a rapid response team, reporting directly to government and serving as a barometer to measure the extent of the incidents, the circumstances which allow for their continuation and the provision of tools to address them”***.

The NAP supports and aligns with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees which promotes the global response to forced displacement. The Global Compact on Refugees provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.

The **main focus** of the NAP is to specifically address the issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the country. In addition to existing measures, the NAP is also intended to combat xenophobia and related intolerance and to address, among others, the following:

- Promotion of human dignity through the promotion and protection of human rights. This is of particular relevance to the work of UNHCR which seeks to find solutions for refugees to promote and protect their human rights.

- Raising awareness of anti-racism, equality and anti-discrimination issues among public officials, civil society and the general public, mobilising support from a wide range of people and addressing the need to prevent, combat and address racism.
- Encouraging the collection of data regarding racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and allow for a more comprehensive assessment of the needs to effectively combat it.
- Ensuring that the concerns of individuals and groups encountering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are more effectively addressed.

Let me also take this opportunity to urge organisations and institutions to be the support the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development requires to steer the NAP and South Africa towards a non-racial, tolerant society that recognises its plurality and diversity based on the values of equality and human dignity through the promotion of anti-racism education, the promotion of constitutional values and the advancement of human rights, through dialogue and action.

Let UNHCR therefore, be amongst the first to commit itself to lending what support it can to realise these goals. UNHCR will continue to support the Government of South Africa, jointly with other stakeholders, in the implementation of the NAP.

I THANK YOU.