

Distr. RESTRICTED

E/CN.4/2005/WG.20/WP.2

15 August 2005

ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixty-second session

FIFTH SESSION

OF THE WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT  
Geneva, 29 August – 2 September 2005

**THE ABILITY OF MAINSTREAM WESTERN EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES  
AND POLITICIANS TO INTEGRATE PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN  
POLITICAL LIFE AND IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:  
THE IMPACT OF RACIST AND EXTREME RIGHT-WING PARTIES**

**Working Paper prepared by**

**Mr. Joe Frans**

**Member of the Working Group of  
Experts on People of African Descent**

---

Note: The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author.

## I. Introduction

“The ideological dependence on racialism is intact and, like its metaphysical existence, offers in historical, political and literary discourse a safe route into meditations on morality and ethics; a way of examining the mind-body dichotomy; a way of thinking about justice; a way of contemplating the modern world”.

Toni Morrison

*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

1. In this paper, I will assert that political decisions and political parties affect the lives of people of African descent living in Western Europe. I am a politician; I will therefore not attempt to present an all-encompassing paper in the traditional sense. Rather, I will try to present, as structured as possible, some entangled ideas and thoughts that I believe can help in understanding the failure of mainstream political parties to implement strategies that successfully integrate people of African descent in Western Europe. I will assert that the presence of extreme right-wing parties in electoral politics has an impact on mainstream political parties and their policies. I will suggest that the political responses towards this phenomenon have to be multifaceted and inclusive. I will present a few examples of this, and I will maintain that the participation of people of African descent in political organizations and their representation is a prerequisite for a successful campaign for equal rights for all. I will reflect on the aftermath of the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Europe, I will conclude with the challenge of organizing and networking, and I will finally present a few recommendations on how to proceed in the years ahead.

2. Quite clearly, racism is the most relevant underlying explanation in trying to understand the role of political parties in the integration of people of African descent in political life and in decision-making processes in Western Europe. Without an understanding of how racism permeates the very social fabric of Western societies and how its cancerous cells affect both its perpetrators and the strategies victims are constantly devising to survive, one can never really understand the mechanisms needed to redress this entrenched form of moral and ethical injustice. Then there is still the matter of material equality of rights and justice.

3. “Racism is not just a topic for ethics and political philosophy. The existence of systemic racism—its consequences for the structures of the societies—has deep implications”.<sup>1</sup>

4. In sharing with you my reflection on the impact of racist and extreme right-wing parties on mainstream Western European political parties and politicians and their ability in integrating people of African Descent in the political life and in decision making processes., a reflection on the theory or conception of racism in the Western European setting is necessary.

5. According to Fredrickson, racism has two components: difference and power. “It originates from a mindset that regards “them” as different from “us” in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the ethnoracial Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group. The possible consequences of this nexus of attitude and action range from unofficial but pervasive social discrimination at one end of the spectrum to genocide at the other, with government-sanctioned segregation, colonial

---

<sup>1</sup> Babbitt, Susan E. and Sue Campbell, eds., *Racism and Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1999, p. i.

subjugation, exclusion, forced deportation (or “ethnic cleansing”), and enslavement among the other variations on the theme. In all manifestations of racism from the mildest to the most severe, what is being denied is the possibility that the racializers and the racialized can coexist in the same society, except perhaps based on domination and subordination. Also rejected is any notion that individuals can obliterate ethnoracial difference by changing their identities.”<sup>2</sup>

6. For the purpose of this paper, I will use the definition of people of African descent as described by Mr. Peter Lesa Kasanda. Mr. Kasanda defines “persons of African Descent... as descendants of the African victims of the Trans-Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea slave trade, including those of the sub-Sahara slave trade”. Furthermore he includes “those Africans and their descendants who, after their countries’ independence emigrated to or went to work in Europe, Canada and the Middle East where they also experienced racial discrimination suffered by those who live in Western European countries”<sup>3</sup>. The largest number of slaves was transported on the trans-Atlantic route; they were taken from the west coast of Africa and mainly sent to the western hemisphere. A small number was sent to Europe. A smaller number of slaves came from the interior of West Africa, East Africa and parts of Southern Africa, and were mainly destined to the Middle East and some islands in the Indian Ocean.<sup>4</sup>

7. Paragraph 13 of the Durban Declaration and paragraph 119 of the Durban Programme of Action, express acknowledgment of the fact that Africans and people of African descent continue to be victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which manifests itself as a direct consequence of slavery and the slave trade, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

8. The classification of Mr. Kasanda of the various forms of racial discriminatory policies and acts, which prevail in different regions, suggests that people of African descent represent a diverse community at different stages of economic development and with different issues, needs and expectations.

9. For the sake of simplicity, any reference to Western Europe will include only those European countries, which are member States of the EU and are at the same time members of the Western European and Other States Group within the United Nations regional grouping system as of 1 July 2005.<sup>5</sup>

10. Furthermore, an understanding of the fact that “the varieties of racism that developed in the West had greater impact on world history than any functional equivalent that we might detect in another era or part of the world...the logic of racism was fully worked out, elaborately implemented, and carried to its ultimate extremes in the West, while at the same time being identified, condemned, and resisted from within the same cultural tradition. What makes Western racism so autonomous and conspicuous in world history has been that it

---

<sup>2</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> E/CN.4/2003/WG.20/WP.3, *Identification and definition of ‘people of African descent’*, Working paper prepared by Peter L Kasanda, Chairperson, United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent, par. 6.

<sup>4</sup> E/CN.4/2003/WG.20/WP.3, *ibid.*, par. 3 with reference to “The Slave Route”, a UNESCO project on the causes, mechanisms and consequences of the slave trade.

<sup>5</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

developed in a context that presumed human equality of some kind.”<sup>5</sup> The debate and situation on the ground differ from state to state. For example, in some countries, the discussion is centred on representation and terminology. For instance, “...in Britain ‘black’ has four main meanings. It is used, as in America, as a term for people descended from sub-Saharan Africa. It is also ubiquitously employed as a word for this latter group and ‘Asians’ (British definition). A third usage is to equate the term with all people who are not white. Finally, ‘Black’ is used in anti-racist debate as a political label for those who experience and resist White racism (this usage is sometimes signalled by the use of a capital ‘B’). The fact that four definitions can be supplied is an indication of the fluidity of the meaning of ‘black’. To add to the confusion, each of these definitions is often used interchangeably”<sup>6</sup>.

11. In France, “The French conceptual framework (defining official approaches and sociological research) is heavily dependent on the distinction between French nationals and foreigners (rather than that between ‘ethnic minorities’ and the majority), and on questions of culture rather than the concept of ‘race’. Yet to suggest that all French research falls into the dualistic pattern of the ‘French/foreigners’ approach (often collapsed into a dichotomy between the French and ‘immigrants’) would be as erroneous as to suggest that all British research is of the problematic ‘race relations’ variety. Misunderstandings between the two countries are often a result of just such stereotyping. Recently in France, there have been as many critiques of the dualism of the ‘French/immigrants’ approach as there have of the ‘race relations’ approach in Britain”<sup>7</sup>. In other European countries, the debate is centred on migrants as such, irrespective of origin.

12. Even in Sweden, there is a real debate that stems from changing times and concepts. “There is a persistent tendency on the part of those who regard themselves as “real” Swedes to attempt to localize and demarcate the non-European “immigrant” problem into the segregated sector of Swedish society where the non-Europeans live. The increasing isolation between non-Europeans (as well as European Muslims) and those who regard themselves as “real” Swedes has increased the mutual ignorance of the two groups. Because of their lack of intimate contact with non-Europeans, “real” Swedes create and maintain stereotypes about them. Most of the stereotypes have no basis in fact, but even those that are superficially true are not properly understood by “real” Swedes. Even when they do not mean to be unfriendly, “real” Swedes find it difficult to accept certain “different” or “peculiar” aspects of non-European life”<sup>8</sup>. This is an echo of the situation in the whole of Europe. This echo is reverberated by Gunnar Myrdal, in his famed book *An American Dilemma*, “... there is a natural tendency on the part of white people in America to attempt to localize and demarcate the Negro problem into the segregated sector of American society where the Negroes live. The increasing isolation between Negroes and whites has ... increased the mutual ignorance of the two groups.... Because of their lack of intimate contact with Negroes, whites create and maintain stereotypes about them. Most of the stereotypes have no basis in fact, but even those that are superficially true are not [properly] understood by whites.... Even when they do not

---

<sup>6</sup> Alastair Bonnett, *Radicalism, Anti-Racism, and Representation*, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France*, New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Allan Pred, *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000, p. 57.

mean to be unfriendly to Negroes, whites observe that certain aspects of Negro life are “different” or “peculiar”.”<sup>9</sup>

13. This is just to show the confusion in terms of substance and terminology that abounds when attempting to treat Western Europe as one entity. However, it is my view that certain features remain common, above all, the processes that affect the lives of people of African descent and those strategies that might be useful in influencing policy and politicians.

14. It can also be noted that the African presence in Europe is not recent. It was not uncommon in ancient Greece and Rome, and Africans lived in Arabia and other parts of Asia before the rise of Islam. The development of the international trade of African slaves by the Arabs over fifteen hundred years ago and the much more intensive trade by Europeans and Americans from the fifteenth century onwards made that presence essentially global. Certainly, a discussion of the plight of people of African descent living in Europe has to deal with this historic fact and the Diaspora that resulted from it.

15. “Relations between peoples in Diasporas and their ancestral homelands are complex and full of dialectical contradictions. First, there is anger, bitterness and remorse among the exiles--and often among the people at home--over the weaknesses that permitted the dispersion to occur. Second, there is conflict when the dominant hosts attempt to justify the subordinate status of the exiles, and the latter, in turn, refuse to accept the status thrust on them. Often the dominant groups display contempt for the homelands of their victims, and the latter feel constrained to defend the countries from which they or their ancestors came. Third, there is often an acrimonious debate among the exiles themselves and between them and their host and ancestral communities, as to whether the exiles should return to their homelands. The issues are as follows: Under what conditions should this return take place, and what are the implications for all concerned? Fourth, if a return does occur, there is frequently a conflict between the return and the resident populations. A corollary is the issue of what effect a return will have on those exiles still in the diaspora. Last, the various groups of exiles, their hosts and the people in the homelands face the problem of what to do once the issues arising from the dispersion have been resolved. This is almost inevitable because human beings adapt to almost any condition in which they find themselves, and they often fear change”<sup>10</sup>. This reality demands then a continued dialogue between the diaspora on a global scale. It also demands a continued dialogue between the mother continent, its leaders and people and the diaspora.

16. Against this background, the Durban Declaration cannot be underestimated and its follow-up mechanisms neglected. The follow-up on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is one of those tasks that never end. It is a task that needs to be attended to with even more zeal today than ever before. “Tolerance evolves, like culture or language”<sup>11</sup>. It can therefore be maintained that also the manifestations and expressions of racism change like tolerance, language and culture. It is therefore imperative to constantly devise and revise strategies in countering the changing manifestations of racism.

---

<sup>9</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 1962 [1944], lxxvii, 956.

<sup>10</sup> Harris, Joseph E., ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 2nd ed., Washington, D. C., Howard University Press, 1993, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> A. Wade Smith, “Prologue: Reflections on Racial Attitude Research”, in Tuch, Steven A. and Jack K. Martin eds., *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s Continuity and Change*, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997, p. 13.

17. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is firmly placed in our hands as a good tool for that never-ending task. Never-ending tasks are easily perceived as heavy burdens. However, despite all the troubles and tribulation of the World Conference, we do not have to look at it that way. With Durban, the burden has turned into an opportunity.

18. The Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference and its follow-up process have turned our mission into a common vision of responsibility. It is quite clear that “racism propounded by the extreme Right is undermining Europe’s progressive political traditions by redefining the debate around the welfare state, and in this, both elitist regionalists and racist nationalists play a distinct role”<sup>12</sup>.

## **II. The impact of extreme right-wing parties on mainstream political parties and policy**

19. Racism and extreme right-wing activity are gaining ground in Western Europe and around the globe. Populist parties with xenophobic views are gaining ground. A large number of violent crimes with racist overtones have been committed in recent years. It may also be that other forms of extremism are on the rise<sup>13</sup>. Western European countries vary in size, economy and temperament and have varying constitutional systems. Some are constitutional monarchies, others are republics; some have proportional representation systems, others are single constituencies; some have a federal system, others not; some have bicameral systems, others have single chambers; some have strong centralised systems and others have strong decentralised systems. The parliamentary control of affairs varies. The importance of political parties and political personalities vary. Yet, it can be argued that in all these systems, politicians and political parties are critical in the formation of policies and their implementation and follow-up.

20. This rich political landscape and cultural diversity means that the manifestations of racism and discrimination vary from country to country and from region to region. It also means that priorities are different. Inevitably, the responses are also different. The topography of racism and discrimination is consequently as varied as the continent. Certain features are easily recognizable; others need good background knowledge and local expertise.

21. My assumption is that right-wing extremism has an impact on mainstream political parties and politicians and therefore on policy. The triangular shift of policy in order to minimize the political space for populist parties and extremist parties leads often to tighter anti-immigration policies and eventually to anti-migrants sentiment and finally racism. This affects the lives of people of African descent in Western Europe. One can clearly speculate that the recent terrorist bombings, borne out of extremism, have had a major impact on policy. Mainstream parties have made a similar triangular shift in policy in order to prevent a popular shift of votes to extreme right parties. My other assumption is that there is a clear link between anti-Semitism and racism and its effects on people of African descent. Historically anti-Semitism

---

<sup>12</sup> Liz Fekete, “Popular Racism in Corporate Europe”, in *Race and Class*, p. 189.

<sup>13</sup> Joe Frans, *Parliamentarians contributing to the positive image of minorities, Regional seminar of experts. Implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: An Exchange of Ideas on How to Move Forward, Brussels, 10-12 December 2003, HR/BRUXELLES/SEM.5/2003/BP.3 OHCHR.*

has been the main feed of right-wing extremism. In recent times, the same people who feed on anti-Semitism have added to their agendas anti-migrant sentiments, racism affecting mainly people of African descent, homophobia and Islamophobia.

22. The denial of the Holocaust is a central part of Nazi and racist propaganda that attracts considerable public attention as well as a growing number of disparate political groups. Just a few generations on from the liberation of Auschwitz, we see an alarming rise in right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism throughout Europe, even though their modus operandi has changed somewhat. Recently, we have also faced a wave of Islamophobia in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Madrid and London bombings.

23. Today, these groups work and meet in an international arena. They organize themselves in political parties and use modern technology and methods to spread their message rapidly across national borders. National efforts alone are no longer sufficient to counteract them.

24. “Since 1984, the political expression of this social disease has been the growth of neo-fascist and far-right parties; the two have fed off each other. Yet, to a degree, it has been held in check by the “historic memory” of the horrors of Hitler’s Germany. However, this has begun to change, as recent events have triggered the perception that Christendom is at war with the Dar al Islam, allowing far-right parties to claim a popular resonance and repackage themselves in a way that jettisons much of their historical baggage”<sup>14</sup>. In all this, politicians and their parties play a role. Whether it was slavery, Apartheid or the Holocaust, political parties and politicians played a decisive role.

25. The awesome task of implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action demands from us a moral obligation, an obligation to learn from the past to build a better future for all. While we should learn from the past, and not only from the facts and figures, we should never forget to act.

26. The World Conference against Racism aptly brought home the simple fact that racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and all other prejudices against groups are based on the same tenet: the idea that there are inferior and superior human beings; that all forms of intolerance are the denial of the equal dignity of all human beings. When one group takes upon itself the right to determine the value of other people, anyone at all, any group may become a target at any time. The negation of the oneness of the human family is a negation of the integrity of the human creation itself. Racism has always been both an instrument of discrimination and a tool of exploitation. I mean that there is a moral imperative for politicians and political parties to play an active role in ensuring the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

27. “The first country to have integrated the extreme right at the national level was Italy in 1994, followed by Austria (2000), Denmark (2001), and populist right parties entered governing coalitions in both Portugal and the Netherlands during 2002. However, whilst the extreme right remains powerful in other countries, especially France and Belgium, it has

---

<sup>14</sup> Glyn Ford, “*Racism and Xenophobia in Europe Stemming the Rising Tide*”, in UN Chronicle Dec. 2004.

never become part of their governing coalition (although the National Front (FN) has briefly shared power with the mainstream right in some localities in the past)”<sup>15</sup>.

28. Despite the fact that in 2004, all 15 EU countries had constitutional provisions, adequate parliamentary instruments, a good legal framework as well as specialised institutions to combat racism and discrimination, the facts on the ground speak an entirely different language. The facts show that implementation is very bad. The extreme right, even though some may say that it is not as active as in the mid-eighties and nineties, has its impact on mainstream political parties.

29. “During the last 20 years, there has been a major growth in electoral support for the extreme right in many European countries. This has been true even in countries that have historically been immune to extremism, such as Denmark or Norway. Until recently, Britain was the most notable exception to this trend. However, during 2001-3 there have been growing signs that the British National Party (BNP) is in the process of becoming a significant force in a number of areas. Among the party’s most prominent achievements have been: winning 16.4 per cent of the vote in Oldham West in the 2001 general election and over 11 per cent in Oldham East and Burnley; electing three councillors in Burnley and another in Blackburn in 2002; coming third in the 2002 Stoke Mayoral election, only narrowly behind the winner; and winning another hotly-contested council by-election seat in Calderdale in early 2003”<sup>16</sup>.

30. “In June 2004, 732 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were elected by 350 million voters in what was one of the world’s largest-ever elections. What was the outcome? Parties of power were punished across the continent, except the winners were often not their traditional opponents from the left and right, but right populist parties. In these elections, 25 MEPs from ten neo-Nazi and extreme right-wing parties across seven member States, including three of the recent accession States, were elected to the European Parliament. They were joined by dozens more MEPs who share the rhetoric if not the underpinning ideology. This threatens a further intensification of discrimination against the 12 to 14 million third-country nationals and the 4 million black Europeans living in the EU who already face the threat of physical violence, daily discrimination and verbal harassment--a second-class status with third-class treatment”<sup>17</sup>.

31. A short list of those extreme right-wing parties in Europe with impact on mainstream parties would include Jörg Haider and the Freedom Party of Austria and continue with Belgium and the Vlaams Blok led by Frank Vanhecke. This extreme right, racist and Flemish nationalist party is the direct descendant of the pre-war fascist movement. Also in Belgium, Daniel Féret and the extreme right Front National campaign against immigration.

32. “The resurgence of extreme right parties gained its first sudden and dramatic momentum when the Front National (FN), led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, scored 11.2 percent in the 1984 European elections. This took many by surprise, including political and social scientists, most

---

<sup>15</sup> Laurent Kestel, and Laurent Godmer, “*Institutional Inclusion and Exclusion of Extreme Right Parties*”, in Eatwell, Roger and Cas Mudde Eds., *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 133.

<sup>16</sup> Eatwell, Roger and Cas Mudde, eds., *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Glyn Ford, “*Racism and Xenophobia in Europe Stemming the Rising Tide*”, in UN Chronicle Dec. 2004.

of whom at the time had expected rightist extremism to dissipate altogether. Indeed, until the mid-1980s, the organized extreme right remained completely marginalized in Europe, enjoyed little political support, and performed poorly in elections, with the noted exception of the sustained, albeit small-scale presence of the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), which was mostly viewed as just another peculiarity of post-war Italian politics. Even more surprisingly, however, Le Pen's breakthrough reflected not just a single incident but rather a more general watershed: a lasting upsurge of the extreme right all over Europe that reached its first peak with some dramatic electoral gains in the early 1990s, accompanied by a wave of anti-immigrant violence"<sup>18</sup>.

33. In France, the mention of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the Front National will send shivers across the spine of serious anti-racist politicians. Le Pen has been convicted of anti-Semitism on a number of occasions. Also in France, Bruno Mégret's Mouvement National Republicain is openly anti-Islam and anti-Semitic. The shortlist will undoubtedly include Pia Kjærsgaard of Denmark, who exploits Islamophobic sentiments and campaigns for the repatriation of immigrants and non-white refugees.

34. In Germany, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution classifies the German People's Party led by Gerhard Frey, as an openly far-right and anti-Semitic organization. Also in Germany, the Republikaner party led by Rolf Schlierer is a recognised far-right extremist political party. In Greece, the Hellenic Front, with 1.5% of the vote, thrives on anti-Albanian sentiments. In Italy, Gianfranco Fini of the National Alliance and Umberto Bossi of the Northern League can be named. In the Netherlands, the Nederlands Blok, a hard-line group, led by Wim Vreeswijk, and the Centrumdemocraten, led by Hans Janmaat, are both anti-immigrants in nature. The Lijst Pim Fortuyn can also be mentioned.

35. Less known, but active politicians on the margins would include in Portugal, the popular party leader Paulo Portas with 14 seats in parliament. He advocates strong laws against immigration. In Spain, Julian Munoz Palomo leads the Independent Liberal Group and Josep Anglada leads the anti-immigration Platform for Catalonia, which campaigns under the slogan "For better control of immigration".

36. "Some of these parties can now be considered as full members of the political arena. This is particularly true in Belgium, Austria, Italy, and France."<sup>19</sup> It is quite evident that across the EU, there are extreme right-wing parties in all the member states. Some are more successful than others; some have parliamentary seats, others not; some are populist, others hard-liners. However, all of them have a certain amount of political impact.

37. "Racism today is electoral. In the post-war period, the racism of the political parties was held in check by the need for a cheap immigrant labour force to rebuild Europe's manufacturing base. But, in a technological society, where workers are no longer needed in such large numbers, there is no longer a tension between the state's need for immigrant workers and the far Right's desire to repatriate them."<sup>20</sup> This means that it is only through

---

<sup>18</sup> Lars Rensmann, "*The New Politics of Prejudice: Comparative Perspectives on Extreme Right Parties in European Democracies*", in *German Politics and Society*, 21.4 (2003).

<sup>19</sup> Alexandre Dézé, "*Between Adaptation, Differentiation and Distinction*", in Eatwell, Roger and Cas Mudde Eds., *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p 19

<sup>20</sup> Liz Fekete, *Popular racism in corporate Europe*.

political means and efforts that we can defeat these sentiments. The importance of political parties and politicians in the fight against racism and discrimination is obvious.

38. “Thus, extreme and radical populist right parties are far from being a short-lived, transitory, and temporary protest phenomenon that is temporarily endorsed by alienated voters lacking identifiable beliefs; they have largely consolidated their positions in the electoral landscape and beyond....Political success, then, is seen as particularly dependent on the extreme right's own strategic moves to facilitate new political issues that respond to failures of established parties. Other scholars argue that it is, in turn, general shifts in political discourses and climates-and interactions between mainstream and extremist politics-that have enhanced the opportunity structures of the extreme right. This argument focuses on the formation of anti-immigrant policies and national-populist resentments articulated by established democratic parties and within public spheres across Europe”.<sup>21</sup>

39. On the other hand, it is clear that the impact of the extreme right is negative to the participation of people of African descent in the decision making process in Western Europe. In addition, it has to be said that there are many political parties who have taken active steps to be inclusive and are making efforts to encourage active participation of people of African descent in the decision making processes in Western Europe. Almost, if not all, mainstream political parties in all EU countries have politicians who are actively engaged in the fight against racism. Most mainstream political parties have platforms against racism and discrimination as well as policies for diversity and integration. However, it is common knowledge that much more needs to be done.

### **III. The political effects of racism on people of African Descent in Western Europe**

40. As shown, the extreme right has a real impact on mainstream politics in Europe. This leads to the denial of equal rights and opportunity for people of African descent in Western Europe and to the inability of political parties to successfully integrate Afro-descendants in their societies.

41. All Western European countries adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at the end of the World Conference against Racism. Therefore, on the face of it, things look good. However, the reality on the ground is different. We know that despite the fact that we, politicians, adopt good laws in parliament to combat racism, they are not implemented. It is also clear that there is a widespread exploitation of racism in politics by extreme right political parties. There is also widespread racism and discrimination in everyday life. We know that the triangular shift in policy by mainstream political parties in fending off extreme right-wing parties in order to win popular support sometimes leads to painful effects on the everyday life of people of African descent living in Western Europe. This can be seen in the economic exploitation of people without legal documents, the so-called “Sans-Papiers”, and the rise of Islamophobia since 11 September 2001. It can also be seen in the way citizenship laws and migration policies are applied in many EU countries. It can be seen by looking at people of African descent and certain other third-country nationals who are subjected to arbitrary identity checks in what is called in literature as racial profiling. It can be seen in the denial of access to justice, discrimination on the job market and in discriminatory housing policies. Prejudices towards minorities such as migrant workers and asylum seekers are

---

<sup>21</sup> Lars Rensmann, “*The New Politics of Prejudice: Comparative Perspectives on Extreme Right Parties in European Democracies*”, in *German Politics and Society* 21.4, 2003.

obvious. The challenge of integrating young people, travellers, immigrants and other groups is clear.

42. At the concluding session of the European Conference against Racism in 2000, a Political Declaration was adopted by Ministers of Council of Europe member States. In the document, the Governments concluded that they were conscious of, and alarmed at: “The continued and violent occurrence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and related intolerance, including contemporary forms of slavery, in Europe and in other regions of the world, despite efforts undertaken by the international community and national governments ; The fact that such occurrences target, notably on grounds related to language, religion or national or ethnic origin, persons such as migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, displaced persons, non-nationals, indigenous peoples; or, on grounds related to belonging to minorities, persons such as Roma/Gypsies and Travellers; The related degrading treatment and discriminatory practices; The existence of multiple discrimination; The persistence and development of aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism which can lead to serious and large-scale violations of human rights; The recent examples of ethnic and religious cleansing in Europe and in other regions of the world; The continued occurrence, in many forms, of intolerance on grounds of religion and belief; The dangers of indifference to manifestations of racism; The hostility expressed by certain media and politicians towards vulnerable groups; The support for political parties and organizations disseminating xenophobic ideology in Europe and in other regions of the world; The use of new technologies of mass communication for the dissemination of racist Messages”.<sup>22</sup> The acknowledgement, by European heads of State, of racism on such a large scale is, in my view, positive.

43. The decision politicians take or fail to take has an impact on the daily lives of people of African descent living in Europe. In his elegantly written monologue, titled “Telephone Conversation”, Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, describes the effects of racism on the housing market during his student years in London. In the poem, Soyinka is forced to say, “Madam, I am an African, I hate a wasted journey.” This is because of the countless wasted journeys he is forced to make just to receive negative replies when the property owners finally confront him in person and his skin colour becomes apparent. A more modern example of the effects of racism can be found in the book *Urban Housing Segregation of Minorities in Western Europe and the United States*, where it is stated that “Black minority group segregation is a distinctive feature of many British cities. Although it does not compare in scale and degree of deprivation to North American ghettos, clusters of blacks (Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians) in Britain are well defined and have, over their relatively short history, shown few signs of dissipating. The clusters may vary in size from single blocks of flats in rented housing developments (estates) to extensive tracts of owner-occupied nineteenth century housing in the inner city. The forces, which shape them are nevertheless much the same: social, cultural, economic, and political forces all come into play. As in America, these clusters speak most forcibly of long-term social and economic deprivation underpinned by systematic discrimination and covert and overt hostility against the black population, in housing and in other spheres”.<sup>23</sup> While this is a British example, it is true in most European cities.

---

<sup>22</sup>EUROCONF (2000) 1 final, *Political Declaration adopted by Ministers of Council of Europe member States on Friday 13 October 2000 at the concluding session of the European Conference against Racism*

<sup>23</sup> Blauw, Wim, Juliet Saltman, and Elizabeth D. Huttman, eds., *Urban Housing Segregation of Minorities in Western Europe and the United States*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991, p. 63.

44. On the labour market, racism is present. A new report presented by the British Trade Unions (TUC) Congress on 15 April 2005, argues that at every level of working life many black workers are being denied training opportunities - despite often being better qualified than their white counterparts are. The report shows that 28 per cent of black and minority ethnic workers (BME) are graduates, compared to just 20 per cent of white workers. Only 17 per cent of white graduates have never been offered training, compared to 20 per cent of black workers. "Racism at work is still preventing too many black workers from fulfilling their potential", commented the TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber.<sup>24</sup> "For Africans and other migrants, who are for the most part trying to get a foothold on the labour market, the system of insiders and outsiders is strengthened by the barriers of getting a qualified job".<sup>25</sup>

45. Needless to say, the existence of racial profiling and denied opportunities in everyday lives of people of African descent in Europe is apparent. There is an embarrassing lack of statistics in the public domain to support arguments of racial violence in Western Europe. It is apparent that without official statistics, effective responses cannot be devised.

46. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) notes in one of its reports that "Racist violence is the most heinous manifestation of racism and xenophobia. Its impact stretches beyond the immediate victims to affect families, friends and whole communities. Individual incidents of racist violence or on-going examples of targeted victimisation instil fear in vulnerable communities. When governments and civil society fail to respond effectively to the problem of racist violence, by condemning it and seeking to prevent and punish it, then potential and actual victims can feel that their experiences of victimisation are not taken seriously. At the same time, ineffectual responses to racist violence can send the wrong message to perpetrators – namely, that their actions will go unpunished." It concludes that "The most vulnerable groups identified were (listed in alphabetical order): ethnic minorities within the national population; illegal immigrants; Jews; Muslims; North Africans; people from the former Yugoslavia; refugees/asylum seekers; Roma/Sinti/'Gypsies'. Main perpetrators tend to be: young males; members of extremist politically motivated organizations and others not affiliated to such groups"<sup>26</sup>.

47. In another report, it shows that stances related to ethnic exclusionism are actually present in Western European societies. The results show, among other things, that:

- Resistance to immigrants is shared by half of the population;
- Resistance to asylum seekers is supported at a lower level than resistance to immigrants, by almost a third of the general public;
- Resistance to a multicultural society is shared by an over time rather stable minority of about a quarter of the Europeans, whereas more and more Europeans perceive that the limits to multicultural society have been reached;
- Ethnic distance is present among one fifth in Western and Eastern societies trying to avoid social interaction with migrants both in the public and private domain;
- Opposition to civil rights for legal migrants is supported by an over time rather stable minority of about four out of ten Europeans;

---

<sup>24</sup> Workplace Training - A Race for Opportunity, ISBN: 1 85006 738 4.

<sup>25</sup> Sabuni, Kitimbwa, "A wasted journey?", in Joe Frans Ed., *Africans in Sweden and the labour market*.

<sup>26</sup> European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *RACIST VIOLENCE IN 15 EU MEMBER STATES - A Comparative Overview of Findings*, RAXEN National Focal Points Reports 2001-2004.

- Support for repatriation policies for legal migrants is growing over time and subscribed to by a minority of about one out of five;
- Insistence on conformity of migrants to law is subscribed to by an over time fast growing majority of about two out of three people.<sup>27</sup>

48. The consequences of a lack of statistics can range from the inability to design social responses to the provision of adequate medical research. “Factors affecting health include socioeconomic status, biology, and environment.... In a racist society such as ours, the effect of race is all-encompassing. Race not only affects socioeconomic status, biology, and physical environment; it also affects the way health care institutions function to provide services. Independent of economics, race affects access to care. Independent of economics, race affects the type and quality of health care treatment received. Consequently, to improve the health of African-Americans, it is not sufficient merely to remove economic barriers to access. To improve the health of African-Americans, health care institutions must be more than affordable. They must be just”<sup>28</sup>. We can draw some conclusions and lessons from an observation made on this issue with particular reference to the people of African descent in North America. “Race is a major factor in American life. Of all the factors that adversely affect the health status and outcomes of African Americans, race is one of the major contributors. The roots of the problem can be traced back thousands of years to the very origins of Western life sciences and the health subculture. But racial effects on health outcomes are often ignored and obscured by the very medical and health establishments that purport to aid those afflicted”<sup>29</sup>. There is ample evidence to suggest that people of African descent in Europe live similar realities. When it comes to access to justice, people of African descent in Western Europe are often given a harder time by the police; the thresholds for prosecution are lower; and they receive tougher sentencing.

49. A final example of the impact of discrimination due to direct or indirect political decisions, or the lack of them, is the situation of illegal African migrants in Europe. “The new racism against asylum seekers, marries up the worst racist practices throughout the western world: the segregation of asylum seekers mirrors the anti-black racism of apartheid, or of segregation in the US; the debate about asylum numbers throws us back to Britain's anti-immigrant racism of the 1970s; the scapegoating, victimisation and internment of asylum seekers mirrors the treatment of Jews during the second world war; the targeting of refugee communities.”<sup>30</sup> According to Mokeni Sanato Bibiani “At the political level, the main task is to overcome illegality.”<sup>31</sup>

50. It is quite clear that thousands of people of African descent live in miserable conditions. Those without legal documents have no access to the welfare state, are exploited as cheap labour and have no rights. The apprehension and psychological despair that this causes cannot

---

<sup>27</sup>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Majority populations' attitudes towards migrants and minorities. Report for the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia*, Ref. no. 2003/04/01.

<sup>28</sup> Vernellia R.Randall, *Health Matrix*, in *Journal of Law-Medicine*, 1993.

<sup>29</sup> W. Michael Md Mph Byrd, and Linda A. Md Mph Clayton, *An American Health Dilemma*, V.1, *A Medical History of African Americans and the Problem of Race, Beginnings to 1900*, vol. 1, New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> Liz Fekete, “*The Emergence of Xeno-Racism*”, in *Race and Class*, 43.2, 2001, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Joe Frans Ed., *Report of the Afro-European Conference on Integration*, ISBN: 91-631-1326-0

be described. Many die during their attempt to reach Europe. Others are modern slaves in the trade and trafficking of human beings. In the post-war period, the racism of the political parties was held in check by the need for a cheap immigrant labour force to rebuild Europe's manufacturing base. Liz Fekete maintains that European parties have caved into corporate Europe's agenda and abandoned their commitment to the welfare state, and consequently "immigration is becoming the sole issue that distinguishes the mainstream political parties from each other and, as such, wins, or loses, elections. No country is immune."<sup>32</sup>

50. Obviously, there is abundant evidence to show that inadequate or inexistent political decisions affect people of African descent in an adverse manner in areas such as education, career development, political participation and cultural representation and in many others. People of African descent are often represented by others in the decision-making processes in Europe. Some of the most insightful recent commentaries on the act of cultural representation are to be found in the work of the literary theorist Gayatri Spivak as presented by Alastair Bonnet. "There are two ways, Spivak suggests, we may understand the act of representation. On the one hand, there is representation as re-presentation, as interpretation. On the other, there is representation as 'speaking for' the needs and desires of somebody or something else. The latter is not a very convincing form of ventriloquism. After all, in order to 'speak for' a subject we need to have found some meaning within it. We need, in other words, to have already performed an act of interpretation. As this implies, re-presentation is prior to 'speaking for'. All representations are based on the re-presentation of their subject"<sup>33</sup>.

51. It is safe to conclude that the impact of racist and extreme right-wing parties on the ability of mainstream Western European political parties and politicians to integrate people of African descent in political life and in decision-making processes is negative. Having clearly made the point that political decisions affect the everyday life of people of African descent living in Western Europe, a legitimate and relevant question becomes: what can be the political responses by politicians and political parties to redress these inequalities? I believe that the multifaceted nature in which racism manifest itself demands an equally multifaceted approach. Above all, the challenge of organizing people of African descent living in Western Europe is obvious. The ultimate challenge of this mobilization and organization is the demand for equal rights and opportunities for all: to reaffirm the oneness of humanity. This means ensuring a utopia that rejects human categories as the basis of political representation, participation and policy.

#### **IV. Political responses and survival strategies**

52. As mentioned earlier, many parliamentarians are taking bold stands in contributing to a positive image of minorities. Almost, if not all, mainstream political parties in the EU countries have politicians who are actively engaged in the fight against racism. Most mainstream political parties have platforms against racism and discrimination as well as policies for diversity and integration. The history of anti-racism should acknowledge the positive actions of ordinary people outside the control of the state or any political party.

---

<sup>32</sup> Liz Fekete, "Popular Racism in Corporate Europe", in *Race and Class*, p. 189.

<sup>33</sup> Alastair Bonnett, *Radicalism, Anti-Racism, and Representation*, New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 13.

53. Political responses and survival strategies should include networking between and among people of African Descent and the anti-racist movement. This is needed because of the diasporic nature of this community and because of globalisation. “The political aspects of globalisation involve an apparent loss of control of key aspects of sovereignty by the nation-state, leading to a focus on the control of its own population and its borders. Under these conditions, it is thought that power leaves traditional political channels leading to opaque areas of decision-making, which involves political demobilisation and a loss of faith in the main political parties, a growth of social insecurity and a paradoxical swing between universalising and particularistic impulses. This presents social movements with new possibilities: if it is no longer useful to focus on individual states, instead movements may bypass their own target state and rely on international pressure and the transnational human rights movement to support them.....Globalisation may indeed offer an opportunity to anti-racists since ‘modern communications form the basis for an international civil society of people who share interests and associations across borders’”.<sup>34</sup> This is partly true in defining a temporary utopia and a real necessity for the community of people of African descent in Europe.

54. All countries in Western Europe have committed themselves to fight racism through parliamentary instruments and/or other constitutional provisions. All European countries have constitutional provisions with varying complexity and exactness. The Danish constitution, which is one of Europe’s oldest, has no explicit provision that prohibits racism, aside from a number of parliamentary instruments. Sweden, on the other hand, has many provisions in its constitution that guarantee the equality of individuals before the law. A few other European countries have the same kind of provisions in their national constitutions.

55. Spain and Luxembourg talk about the equality of their citizens in their constitutions. France, with its highly acclaimed egalitarian view of humanity, has a provision based on egalitarian equality, which is construed by some to be in contradiction to the recognition of minorities. Germany, on the other hand, has many articles in its constitution that deal explicitly with this, while Greece has only one. The United Kingdom has its Human Rights Act and the Dutch their Human Rights Law. It can therefore be argued that all EU countries have adequate constitutional provisions to fight racism.

56. It can also be maintained that European countries have signed and or ratified most, if not all, relevant international legal instruments, like the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The proposed, but stalled, EU constitution also has adequate provisions and good legal grounds upon which the fight against racism and discrimination can be fought. This can be seen in part 2, section 3 on equality article II – 21.1 and 2. At the EU level, there is the EU directive against racism. Therefore, there seems to be an adequate political and legal frame to counter racist tendencies in Western European countries. In addition, there are a number of institutions on the European and national scale to ensure effective implementation and redress. The existence of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) is clearly a show of political will. ECRI was established at the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe. The decision to establish ECRI is contained in the Vienna Declaration adopted by the first Summit on 9 October 1993. The European Conference against Racism, held in Strasbourg in October 2000, called for the strengthening of ECRI. On 13 June 2002, the

---

<sup>34</sup> Anthias, Floya Ed., *Rethinking Anti-Racism: From Theory to Practice*, Florence, KY, USA: Routledge, 2001. p. 61.

Committee of Ministers adopted a new Statute for ECRI, consolidating its role as an independent human rights monitoring body on issues related to racism and racial discrimination. The programme of activities of ECRI comprises three aspects: country-by-country approach, work on general themes and activities in relation with civil society.

57. The primary task of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) is to provide the European Community and its Member States with objective, reliable and comparable information and data on racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism at the European level in order to help the EU and its Member States to establish measures or formulate courses of action against racism and xenophobia. Based on the data collected, the EUMC studies the extent and development of the phenomena and manifestations of racism and xenophobia, and analyses their causes, consequences and effects. It is also the task of the EUMC to work out strategies to combat racism and xenophobia and to highlight and disseminate examples of good practice regarding the integration of migrants and ethnic and religious minority groups in the EU Member States. The very core of the EUMC activities is the European Information Network on Racism and Xenophobia (RAXEN). It is designed to collect data and information at both national and European level. This is accomplished via 25 National Focal Points, contracted by the EUMC to collect, coordinate and disseminate national and EU information in close cooperation with the EUMC.<sup>35</sup> Another example of a Europe-wide politically established institution that has an anti racist impact is the European Ombudsman for human rights.

58. Political support to Europe-wide non-governmental organizations like ENAR and UNITED is also a show of political will. ENAR, a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in the EU member states, is a major outcome of the 1997 European Year against Racism. Between March and September 1998, more than 600 NGOs were involved in national and European round table consultations to discuss the viability of such a structure. The 1998 Constitutive Conference of the European Network Against Racism brought together more than 200 representatives of these organizations to draw up a common programme of action. UNITED is a voluntary cooperation of more than 500 organizations from 49 European countries working together - united in the biggest anti-racism network. Another example of a Europe-wide NGO is the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), an umbrella organization for co-operation between European NGOs concerned with refugees. Currently ECRE has 74 member agencies in 29 countries. Principal activities include policy development and research, advocacy, legal analysis, information services to members, networking and capacity building in South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe. The work of ECRE work is coordinated by its Secretariat in London and an office in Brussels.

59. The EU summit of head of states has on various occasions made political statements and commitments against racism. Within the structures of the EU itself, there is a Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities with the task of contributing to the development of a modern, innovative and sustainable European Social Model with more and better jobs in an inclusive society based on equal opportunities. The Directorate-General's job is to play its part in addressing the major challenges and formulating concrete responses to achieve this strategic objective, especially with regard to social exclusion and social protection. This can be done by reinforcing the co-operation between Member States, drawing up legislation and running programmes to counter discrimination, promoting fundamental rights and by enhancing the integration of disabled people. Needless to say, there

---

<sup>35</sup> The EUMC was established by Council Regulation (EC) No 1035/97 of 2 June 1997 (OJ L 151, 10 June 1997) which was amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 1652/2003 of 18 June 2003.

is a politically responsible Commissioner as well. The most recent work by the EU Council was a lunch discussion on 2 June 2005, where ministers examined the text of the Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia, of which the original proposal was presented by the Commission on 29 November 2001.<sup>36</sup>

60. At the national level, there are various examples of institutional structures with a political mandate to take measures against racism. Such structures range from the ombudsman against ethnic discrimination, the national agencies for integration, to commissions for racial equality, and financial and political support for national independent non-governmental organizations working against racism.

61. Several United Nations human rights instruments, ratified by Sweden, forbid racial discrimination. The Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (the DO) was established by Parliament on 1 July 1986 through the Law against Ethnic Discrimination. The Ombudsman is elected by the Government for a period of six years. Its tasks are regulated in the law 1999/131 on the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination.

62. However, the Law on Measures against Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life has, since 1 July 1994, given special tasks to the DO. It has, for example, enabled the DO to represent individuals who may have been the victims of discrimination in the Labour Court. The DO should also see to it that employers actively promote ethnic diversity in the work place.

63. The DO can receive individual complaints: a complaint can come from a person who, for example, considers to have been bypassed for a job, or feels they were subjected to harassment by an employer or by other employees, and that this treatment was based on their ethnic background. If the person submitting the complaint is a union member, the DO must first ask if the union is willing to take the case. If the union decides to not take the case, the DO can investigate the complaint. Some cases are resolved through settlements as a result of communications between the DO or the union and the employer. The complainant is not required to pay for the legal costs involved in cases brought by the DO to the Labour Court.

64. A good example of a commission for racial equality is the British Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). The CRE has statutory powers under the Race Relations Act of 1976. These include powers

- to advise or assist people with complaints about racial discrimination, harassment or abuse,
- to conduct formal investigations of companies and organizations where there is evidence of possible discrimination; if the investigation does find discrimination, the CRE can oblige the organization to change the way it operates;
- to take legal action against racially discriminatory advertisements and against organizations that attempt to pressurise or instruct others to discriminate — such as employers instructing employment agencies not to send them applicants from ethnic minorities, or companies instructing their workers to discriminate in the way they provide goods or services,
- to assist individuals to take judicial review action to challenge decisions of public bodies, including their compliance to the statutory duty to promote race equality ('the race equality duty').

CRE has regional and local offices throughout the whole of the United Kingdom and presents a number of reports, studies, strategies and initiatives. It takes active part in the public debate

---

<sup>36</sup> European Council document 8849/05 (Presse 114).

against racism and has a parliamentary bulletin. Since January 2004, the CRE has published a regular Parliamentary Bulletin for Members of Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly Members and all those with an interest in furthering race equality issues within local, national and international government. An important element of the work of CRE is the effective dissemination and advocacy of practical policy proposals on racial equality to parliamentarians, Governments, EU institutions and intergovernmental organizations. The CRE public affairs team works to monitor legislation; develop and maintain relationships with political parties in Westminster; provide input into legislation; and stage events to bring CRE policy to the attention of political audiences. The CRE works closely with various government departments, but principally the Home Office. The staff meets regularly with ministers and officials to discuss racial equality, and has contributed to a number of policy initiatives. Other examples of good national bodies against racism are Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism in Belgium, the French Agency for the development of inter-cultural relations (ADRI), Ireland's Equality Authority or Sweden's Integrationsverket.

65. "Political control and political representation should take place at the same level where decisions are taken."<sup>37</sup> Apart from institutionalised political structures, it is clear that many political parties are gradually fielding people of African descent in elections, and a few have been elected to national parliaments or local assemblies. This is the case in the EU Parliament, the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany and Greece among others. Mostly people of African descent have been elected to local assemblies and often only represent single cases or islands of success. "The existence of authoritarian or even extremist organizations may lead to political participation, but their existence does not necessarily lead to political trust. Political participation and political trust is explained by the degree of civic engagement. The more an ethnic group is engaged in the own community's affairs the more it participates in local politics and the more it trusts the political institutions."<sup>38</sup>

66. There are also individuals in all national parliaments who devote much energy, time and effort to defending the rights of people of African descent in their respective parliaments. "A number of commentators have argued that only when black and minority issues are represented in mainstream politics is it possible to avoid a continuing marginalization of these issues."<sup>39</sup> Anwar has noted, for example, that "it is by incorporating ethnic minorities into the political system, not as nominal, but as effective members who participate actively in the decision-making process, that their alienation can be prevented".<sup>40</sup>

67. An interesting observation however is that participation and representation have a rather limited scope. "The race issue appeared to count for little or nothing in constituency battles beyond those 44 seats in which a minority candidate was fielded. In all cases bar one, the successful minority candidates were returned by constituencies containing sizeable minority electorates. The exception, whilst interesting and a powerful alternative to the framework

---

<sup>37</sup> Schmitt, Hermann and Jacques Thomassen, eds., *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 256.

<sup>38</sup> Meindert Fennema, and Jean Tillie, "Political Participation and Political Trust in Amsterdam: Civic Communities and Ethnic Networks", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 25.4, 1999.

<sup>39</sup> Jaqi Nixon, "Chapter Nine: The Role of Black and Asian MPs at Westminster", in Saggar, Shamit Ed., *Race and British Electoral Politics*, London, UCL Press, 1998, p. 202.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

discussed in this article, is just that: an exception to an underlying and far-reaching paradigm for the political integration of ethnic minorities in Britain. Minority representatives plainly have the potential to enter the mainstream but so far, they have generally not done so. Curiously, this is in large part the consequence of distinct racialisation processes that have opened up new opportunities whilst curbing others. In terms of the intersection between representative politics and racial politics in late 1990s, the impression is underlined that race counts, but for ethnic minorities alone.”<sup>41</sup>

## **V. What has happened after Durban?**

68. It must be mentioned that all EU countries have specialised institutions created to combat racism. Some have parliamentary ombudsmen like Denmark. Others have a Commission for Racial Equality like in the United Kingdom. Some have a broad range of institutions to deal with these issues like in Ireland and Finland. Others have human rights institutions that deal with racism and discrimination.

69. Many countries have language classes to speed up integration. France has, in a very admirable way, passed a law stating that slavery is a crime against humanity. Belgium is in the process of financing a museum that puts the history of colonialism in a proper context. Germany has a good Internet surveillance model and Ireland is not afraid to talk of empowerment. It is against this background that we are to explore the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

### **V.1. The role of politicians and parliamentarians**

70. In the Durban Declaration, there are seven paragraphs directly connected to the work of parliamentarians. Paragraph 27 refers to the fact that racism is gaining ground and strives to regain political, moral and even legal recognition. Paragraph 79 is, in my view, the main paragraph with regard to this topic. It identifies the lack of political will as the main obstacle to making progress in the fight against racism. It reads as follows: “We firmly believe that the obstacles to overcoming racial discrimination and achieving racial equality mainly lie in the lack of political will, weak legislation and lack of implementation strategies and concrete action by States, as well as the prevalence of racist attitudes and negative stereotyping”.

71. As mentioned earlier, all EU countries have adequate constitutional provisions and parliamentary instruments to combat intolerance. My argument therefore is that there is a lack of political leadership and engagement. Mainstream political parties lack resilience in their implementation strategies. Many politicians pay lip service, often even mean well at heart, but lack the commitment to engage themselves on a long-term basis.

72. Paragraph 83 underlines the key role of politicians and political parties in combating racism and paragraph 85 condemns political parties with racist platforms and reaffirms that such actions violate human right standards. In paragraph 94, the Declaration deals with the stigmatisation of people of different origins by acts or omissions of public authorities.

73. Paragraph 108 recognises the necessity for special measures or positive actions for victims of racism. The rationale for this particular paragraph is quite obvious. It reads as follows

---

<sup>41</sup> Shमित Saggar, and Andrew Geddes, “*Negative and Positive Racialisation: Re-examining Ethnic Minority Political Representation in the UK*”, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26.1, 2000, p. 25.

“...Those measures should include measures to achieve appropriate representation in educational institutions, housing, political parties, parliaments and employment, especially in the judiciary, police, army and other civil services, which in some cases might involve electoral reforms, land reforms and campaigns for equal participation”. The paragraph talks about measures for effective action, including social measures, and the introduction of special measures to encourage equal participation of all racial and cultural, linguistic and religious groups in all sectors of society and to bring all on an equal footing.

74. Paragraph 114 recognises the paramount role of parliamentarians in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in adopting appropriate legislation, overseeing its implementation and allocating the requisite financial resources. Finally, paragraph 117 recognises that promoting greater respect and trust among different groups within society must be a shared but differentiated responsibility of Government institutions, political leaders, grass-roots organizations and citizens.

75. Turning to the Programme of Action, we can maintain that the World Conference clearly emphasised the role of political parties and parliamentarians. Four specific paragraphs deal with this. Paragraph 115 underlines the key role that politicians and political parties can play in combating racism, and encourages political parties to develop voluntary codes of conduct, which include internal disciplinary measures for violations thereof, so their members refrain from public statements and actions that encourage or incite racism. Many political parties in the EU have codes of conduct. However, they are not widely known or readily implemented.

76. Finally, Paragraph 219 recognizes that the success of the Programme of Action will require political will and adequate funding at the national, regional and international levels, and international cooperation. It is an open secret that this is the Achilles heel of the whole plan. There is simply no adequate funding.

77. So, what has happened with the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in Sweden? The answer is simple. Not much. As in many other EU countries, very little has happened. Yet, I dare say that there is reason to be optimistic because of the very fact that many of the recommendations are already in effect in Sweden.

## **V.2. The role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**

78. The IPU can play a very special role in this cause. The IPU supported the Durban Conference from the very outset and, together with the South African Parliament, organised a parliamentary meeting in Durban. There were more than 300 members of Parliament from some 50 countries in Durban. Durban was instrumental in highlighting not only Parliaments' institutional contribution to the fight against racism, but also in emphasising the individual responsibilities of members of parliament. I wish to recall the statement by the delegates of the parliamentary conference organised by the IPU in which the following was adopted: “We urge Parliaments to provide special mechanisms to monitor and ensure effective implementation by governments and to initiate activities to fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Such actions would be strengthened by co-operation with civil society.” This implies that the IPU has an obligation to actively follow up.

79. The role of the IPU is highlighted in paragraph 116 of the Durban Programme of Action. That paragraph invited the Inter-Parliamentary Union to encourage debate in, and action by,

parliaments on various measures, including laws and policies, to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In addition, paragraph 181 invites the Inter-Parliamentary Union to actively engage itself. In the follow-up meeting of regional experts in Brussels, I suggested that the IPU sets up a working group to follow-up on Durban and to organise a special debate on this issue during its sessions. I would like to renew this proposal.

## **VI. Conclusion**

80. It is safe to conclude that racism and extreme right-wing activities exist and are gaining ground in Europe. As shown, these extreme right-wing parties have an effect on mainstream political parties and their policies. This affects people of African descent adversely. It will also be fair to conclude that there is a moral imperative for political parties and politicians to do more in ensuring the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. This, I believe, will lead to a good contribution to the positive image of people of African descent. It can also lead to a greater participation of Afro-descendants in the decision-making processes in Europe.

81. In closing, I must say, that it is often within the extreme right-wing spectrum that we see racism manifest itself in political platforms. Yet, it is within the mainstream parliamentary parties that we need to focus our attention on combating racism. We know that right-wing extremism is dangerous, but we should not focus only on that. It exists alongside other, more subtle but still acutely harmful, expressions of intolerance.

82. What we are witnessing today is the increased visibility of group prejudice, xenophobia and daily racism. This is supported by certain political forces, looked upon with indifference by politicians and underestimated as political parties. In a study of black political participation Lawrence Bobo and Franklin D. Gillian, Jr., found that “where blacks hold positions of political power, they are more active and participate at higher rates than whites of comparable socioeconomic status” and that “black empowerment [measured as black control of the mayor’s office] is a contextual cue of likely policy responsiveness and encourages blacks to feel that participation has intrusive value. . . Empowerment leads to higher levels of political knowledge and . . . it leads to a more engaged [i.e., trusting and efficacious] orientation to politics.”<sup>42</sup>

83. This is why we need to transform the Durban Plan of Action into reality. This is why we must fight those superficial, simplistic ideas with the lessons of those who know. This is why we must fight that evil ideology wherever it rears its ugly head. The challenge of organising and mobilising people of African descent in Western Europe is obvious. The need of to engage in dialogue and to network with the Diaspora of people of African descent globally to exchange experiences and ideas and to share strategies and to support each other is clear.

84. We must also offer visions for the future. We must contribute to the representation of people of African descent in various political decision-making processes. We must encourage diversity. We must express visions and carry out policies aimed at creating a society that is inclusive; a society that does not leave people behind, a society that puts the problems of discrimination and prejudice high on the political agenda. We must offer a vision that extends

---

<sup>42</sup> Crotty, William, ed., *Political Participation and American Democracy*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 20.

beyond mere categories of humans as the basis of life. We have to maintain the oneness of humanity and constantly demand equal rights and opportunities for all. No one has the right to reduce a person to a mere group identity. No one has the right to deprive people of their unique human dignity. No one has the right to oppress and exploit their fellow human beings. This is why we need to do more to ensure that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action stay alive and are implemented.

## **VII. Recommendations**

Finally, a few recommendations:

1. In celebrating Durban +5, it would be appropriate to evaluate the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action. The national plans of action should also be evaluated. This could be done by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
2. States should be mandated to inform OHCHR on their activities regarding the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on a yearly basis, especially regarding the establishment and implementation of national plans of action. This information should be included by OHCHR in its annual report on Durban implementation to General Assembly. States should also report on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action within their State report for submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).
3. Political parties in Western Europe should be encouraged to reaffirm on a regular basis a code of conduct. Policy guidelines should be adopted in dealing with extreme right-wing organizations. Europe-wide consultations and seminars on representation and participation of people of African descent in the political and decision-making processes could be organised. This could be done in collaboration with the Council of Europe and the North-South Centre.
4. The Council of Europe, ECRI and the EUMC should advise member States of the EU on the collection of disaggregated data. A practical methodology should be presented. The EUMC and ECRI should commission a study on the realities of people of African descent in Europe and recommend strategies to member states of the EU for those issues that affect that community adversely. It is essential that Europe-wide NGOs like ENAR also show a greater interest in the plight of people of African descent living in Europe. They should also be encouraged to conduct independent studies on people of African descent in the EU area.
5. It is recommended that OHCHR organises a conference on people of African descent living in Western Europe in 2006. The conference could be organised in collaboration with the EU and the Council of Europe. In connection with such a conference, a network of parliamentarians and politicians of African descent in Western Europe could be launched.
6. It is recommended that the EU ensures that the European Commission Framework Directive on Racism is adopted as soon as possible. A special fund for measures to promote integration of third-country nationals and migrants, should be created to

complement the European Refugee Fund, the European Social Fund and the Equal Programme. OHCHR and the Anti-Discrimination Unit of the European Commission should hold a consultation on how this could be achieved and how these funds can enhance greater participation and integration of people of African descent in Europe.