

Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe: U.S. Helsinki Commission

**“Racial Equity, Equality, and Justice: Reinforcing U.S.-EU Parliamentary
Coordination to Combat Racism and Systemic Discrimination”**

Committee Members Present:

**Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Ranking Member;
Representative Gwen Moore (D-WI);
Representative Marc Veasey (D-TX)**

Other Members Present:

**Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)
Representative Jim Costa (D-CA);
Representative Sylvia Garcia (D-TX);
Representative Karen Bass (D-CA);
Representative Gregory Meeks (D-NY);
Representative Ted Deutch (D-FL)**

Other Participants:

**Maria Arena, Member, European Parliament;
David McAllister, Member, European Parliament;
Juan Fernando Lopez, Member, European Parliament;
Kristen Clarke, President and Executive Director, National Lawyers’
Committee for Civil Rights Under Law;
Pap Ndiaye, French Historian;
Hilary Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau, National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People (NAACP);
Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality;
Radoslaw Sirkorsi, Member, European Parliament;
Isabel Wiseler, Member, European Parliament;
Maria Walsh, Member, European Parliament;
Sanchez Amor, Member, European Parliament;
Isabel Santos, Member, European Parliament;
Samira Rafaela, Member, European Parliament;
Jaak Madison, Member, European Parliament;
Salima Yenbou, Member, European Parliament;
Alice Kuhnke, Member, European Parliament;**

Assita Kanko, Member, European Parliament;
Miguel Urban Crespo, EP Member, European Parliament;
Marek Belka, Member, European Parliament;
Maria Soraya Rodriguez Ramos, Member, European Parliament;
Romeo Franz, Member, European Parliament;
Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights;
Keenan Keller, Senior Counsel, House Committee on the Judiciary;
Janina Ochojska, Member, European Parliament;
Nicolae Ștefănuță, Member, European Parliament;
Jordi Sole, Member, European Parliament

**The Meeting Was Held From 10:53 a.m. To 1:03 p.m. in Brussels, Belgium,
and via Videoconference, Maria Arena, Member, European Parliament,
presiding**

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ARENA: (Through interpreter.) Colleagues, we're going to start the meeting. We're going to all keep to our timing. We have to be very strict about that. And that's what we sometimes don't do. Apologies, therefore, for the fact that I'm going to be using my little mallet here, my hammer, in order to keep people to their speaking time. It's a little difficult sometimes. Now, if there are no objections to the agenda, the agenda stands adopted. Interpretation is available for English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish. I would encourage people to speak their mother tongue because we have interpreters here, but you do have to use your video camera. Without camera, no interpretation.

Third point on the agenda, which is the subject of our meeting today, we have the joint meeting of our two committees, with my colleague Juan Fernando, who's the chair of the LIBE Committee. We will work together today on racial equity, equality, and justice, with the goal of reinforcing U.S.-EU parliamentary coordination to combat racism and systemic discrimination.

I'd also like to welcome everyone. And I would like to particularly welcome the members of the U.S. Congress. The fact that we're all here means that we want to pursue a joint dialogue on an unusual subject, but very important for our democracy – the struggle for justice and liberty against racism and systemic racism. And we have the terrible situation with George Floyd, who was treated in that way by the police. And that very much wakened us up to the fact that there was this kind of systemic discrimination. Jacob Blake, a young man who was not armed, was shot by a White policeman in Kenosha, and has left this young man paralyzed.

Nevertheless, we condemn any scenes of violence and vandalism which took place after that. But we must combat supremacism. Black Lives Matter is a very important movement. And we have to try to take up our responsibilities as legislators and respond to that. That is why, with this joint meeting, together with the Civil Liberties Committee, we are going to have an exchange of views on the subject. And I'd like to give the floor now to Juan Lopez – Juan Fernando Lopez. But first of all, can I give the floor to Gwen Moore, who is with the Helsinki Commission. You have the floor.

MOORE: Thank you so very much. I am here, and I am so happy – in the absence of our leader, Representative Alcee Hastings, who was unavailable due to a family emergency – I am so happy to be here. And as you've acknowledged, the United States has been caught up in turmoil. Just as of May 25th of this year, the country and the world witnessed or reacted to the inhumane killing of Mr. George Floyd by Minneapolis, Minnesota police.

Mr. Floyd joined a long list of Black Americans whose life was cut short by the struggle for justice and equality. We all benefit from a stronger and more united union when we promote the rights and values of our citizens, regardless of race, sex, language, and place of national origin. So I am so delighted to have been able to join my colleagues, following Mr. Floyd's untimely death, to introduce legislation called the Justice in Policing Act.

I've introduced legislation which supports resolutions on criminal justice reform for many, many years. But recently, I joined in the Justice and Policing Act by adding a provision that would require de-escalation training and make it mandatory for police officers – an action

that was first inspired by the tragic death of a young man in my community, by the name of Dontre Hamilton, who was shot 14 times by police. And his crime? He was sleeping, unarmed, on a public park bench in Wisconsin. And of course, as has been noted, the recent shooting of Mr. Jacob Blake also in my home state of Wisconsin.

The issue of racial justice, however, goes just beyond policing and criminal justice reform. Racism is systemic and pervasive in our everyday institutions. It pervades housing opportunities, job opportunities, educational opportunities and, unfortunately, even our health system. Indeed, systemic racism has been very vividly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, where we have seen a rise in disparate impact on people of color. We have seen the anti-Asian rhetoric with regard to the origin in the handling of the pandemic. And of course, the disproportionate deaths among minority and marginalized communities nationally.

ARENA: Ms. Gwen Moore, may I ask you just to conclude, thank you.

MOORE: Again, thank you so much for your attention to this. I live in a county where 26 percent of the population is African American, but 70 percent of the deaths are African Americans. And this is not because of biological differences. It's because of systemic racism. So thank you all, and I yield back.

ARENA: Thank you. Thank you very much. I give the floor to Shelia Jackson Lee, a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Shelia, you have the floor. Oh, she is not connected. OK. I give the floor to my colleague David McAllister, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

MCALLISTER: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Maria. On behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I would just like to briefly thank the Subcommittee on Human Rights and our Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs for organizing this event, together with our colleagues from the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Helsinki Commission. Transatlantic relations we deal with these issues on a weekly basis in this parliament, are based on common values and deeply rooted democratic principles. I think it's important to underline that across the Atlantic we share the spirit of individual liberty and the conviction that governments must be bound by the rule of law that preserves the rights of individuals and also of minorities. These are the foundations of our democratic societies and core values that we try to support in the rest of the world.

As has already been underlined by the previous speakers, racism and discrimination are an American phenomenon, but not only. They are a global issue. And we must stand against this together. As in the U.S., also here in Europe, there have been wide demonstrations. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are important values in both our democracies. So what I would like to underline is that we look deep into our societies and acknowledge the democratic and political changes that are taking place. And these changes should also be reflected in our future relations with the United States, in order to have a solid base.

I believe that through dialogue and cooperation we can work together towards eradicating human rights violations, starting with in our own societies and then further projecting these values and our commitment onto the rest of the world. Let us not forget to take on board in our discussions most are the most fragile and exposed to violations of their fundamental rights. And that's why I welcome today's event, and that's why I am attending. Thank you, Maria.

ARENA: Thank you, David. I give directly the floor to Juan Fernando, chair of the LIBE Committee. You have the floor, Fernando.

LOPEZ: Yes. Yes. (Laughs.) Good afternoon. Good afternoon. And pleased and honored to be here. I'm sorry that I was some minutes late. But I'm happy that I've made it, because for good reason. This is a good gathering, worth noticing, worth having – and a discussion worth having, worth fulfilling. I was on my way from another meeting, but I would like to address people being part of this discussion on each side of the Atlantic, for one thing.

First of all, I am glad that this meeting is actually taking shape. Like my colleagues on the Subcommittee of Human Rights, DROI, of course, the U.S. Helsinki Commission for the initiative, particularly timely. News reminds us of the need to actively fight racism and discrimination, getting only more intense as time goes by. Racism and protests may take different forms in each part of the Atlantic, but as politicians and legislators we're equally responsible for ensuring, and whenever necessary, restoring social cohesion.

Movements like Black Lives Matter are echoing in the European Union. It is good to engage in a discussion on this issue, which is an issue of us still making an impact in all of our social fabrics, as we need to find peaceful, legal ways to deal with these challenges. Racism is not just a transatlantic issue, namely a component element of the transatlantic dialogue, but a global issue. It is a global issue. And we need to come to universal answers in terms of – in terms of rights. Our countries are all signatories of universal instruments. The United Nations system is now in its 75th birthday being number one, declaring equality of rights and freedoms with no distinction of discrimination of whatever kind – such as race or ethnic origin.

Those commitments have been reinforced by regional instruments at a European level – the Convention of European Human Rights, the European Charter, the fundamental rights of the European Union. All of the European Union treaties are bound to those founding values, which include fundamental rights with no discrimination. And such recognition of rights is clearly not enough, though. These instruments need to be accompanied by policies that ensure the reality of those rights and equalities before the law. Equal justice before the law. That is a mode so key to the U.S. approach to fundamental rights, human rights, civil liberties.

So this meeting is therefore even more timely on the EU side, as the Commission has just made announcements and published an EU Antiracism Plan 2020-2025, containing some promising orientations like reinforcing measures towards implementation of the actual legal framework – in particular, racial equality directive, and the framework decision on combatting racism and xenophobia. It is, however, vague how it intends to swiftly reach an agreement on the 2008 commission proposal to implement equal treatment – the so-called horizontal directive – still pending. It has been blocked by the council for more than 10 years now.

And I would conclude: Looking forward to hearing more details on this and other promising measures as the one we heard from President of the Commission Von der Leyen to appoint an antiracism coordinator across the European Union. And of course, the statements that we are expecting from Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, she will indeed join us to elaborate on the present action plan. So I thank all of the members of this discussion. And I am honored to pass the floor to our co-chair.

ARENA: (Laughs.) Thank you. Thank you, Juan Fernando.

LOPEZ: Maria, back to you.

ARENA: Thank you. I give the floor now to Kristen Clarke, president – I will use French and sometimes English, because I think that democracy and respecting differences is also speaking our own language. So it is possible here. And I thank the interpreters to give us the opportunity to speak our own language. So I will speak now in French.

(Continues through interpreter.) So I present Kristen Clarke, who's president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Thank you.

(Continues in English.) Eight minutes.

CLARKE: Good day. My name is Kristen Clarke, and I'm the president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. The Lawyers' Committee, the organization that I lead, was founded at the request of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, during the height of the last civil rights movement. We work to advance racial justice by mobilizing the leadership and resources of the private bar to protect the civil rights of Black people and other people of color.

I'm here today to sound the alarm on the urgency of the police violence crisis gripping communities across the United States. The killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor have laid bare the crisis of police violence and racial violence faced by Black people across the country. These crises find their roots in our sordid history of slavery and our failure to reckon with our nation's history of racism. The deaths of unarmed Black people have resounded with millions of people across the country, making clear that racism infects every aspect of the criminal justice system in our nation.

For months, diverse coalitions of Americans of all races, ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds have taken to the streets to protest and support the Black Lives Matter movement. Now we are at a turning point as a nation where people across the country are urging the federal government to take bold and transformative steps to fundamentally change the broken relationship between law enforcement and communities of color. We know that Congress stands to play an important role in this fight. The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act meets the challenge of this moment by incentivizing officers to act more as peacekeepers and partners with the community, incentivizing de-escalation tactics and banning techniques such as chokeholds and no-knock warrants.

This important legislation would also create stronger accountability mechanisms for officers who break the law and violate civil rights and qualified immunity, strengthen the ability to federally prosecute cops who use force without basis, and create a national registry of officers who have broken the law or committed misconduct so they simply can't be rehired in another state. I applaud the leadership of Congresswoman Karen Bass, who is participating today, in moving this legislation forward.

But as a congressional bill was under consideration, our nation mourned yet the killing of another unarmed African American, Rayshard Brooks, a Black man killed by a police officer in Atlanta, Georgia, who was merely sleeping in his car in a Wendy's parking lot at the time that he was confronted by police. The killing of unarmed Black men and women across our nation is part of the cancer of racism that we face. It is the civil rights issue of our time. And it is past time that we acted.

These killings have gripped the attention of our nation and the world because of images captured on smartphones that swiftly go viral. These images make it virtually impossible for us to ignore the crisis or look away. We also know that these incidents are arising at a time of escalating White supremacy and racially motivated activity, a pattern that we see across the globe. We need to understand the forces that are allowing White supremacy to tear at democracies across the globe. We also know attacks on the right to protest, a right that lies at the heart of American democracy.

As the Movement for Black Lives grows, attracting people of all races, religions, ages, and backgrounds, we have seen law enforcement at the local, state, and federal levels in certain parts of the country clamp down on protesters, using militarized approaches, rubber bullets, pepper spray, riot gear, and more. My organization, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, filed a federal lawsuit, along with our partners, involving an assault on protesters assembled in Lafayette Square, just outside the shadow of the White House on June 1st.

Our nation's highest law enforcement officer, Attorney General Barr, ordered the use of force on a crowd without warning or provocation. Our case, Black Lives Matter versus Trump, seeks to hold the federal administration accountable for its actions. It is remarkable that in 2020 we are facing unconstitutional use of violent force on peaceful protesters at the hands of our federal government. American democracy will only flourish when free of racial and political violence, and when citizens have the right to protest and call for reform.

When the law does not sufficiently protect people, we must leverage every tool in our arsenal to ensure that people of all races, colors, and creeds have the right to equal treatment and protection under the law, so that we can live up to our nation's most cherished principles. We look forward to promoting racial justice and identifying a restorative justice approach to these issues with partners here and across the globe. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

ARENA: Thank you, Kristen Clarke. I give the floor – (continues through interpreter) – I now give the floor to Professor Pap Ndiaye, who's from Sciences Po Paris I have already heard him speaking at a debate in the Human Rights Committee. You have the floor, sir.

NDIAYE: (Through interpreter.) Thank you. Good morning to everyone. The murder of George Floyd last May led to an international protest movement – very large scale in Europe as well as on other continents, in Asia, in Latin America, in short everywhere. This murder had such resonance because in each country, in each region there are similar situations – not identical ones, but similar. And the protest movement was focused not only on issues of police violence in the United States, but also issues of police violence in other parts of the world. In France, for example, there were very large protests in May and June, bringing together tens of thousands of people with – together two tragic figures, that of George Floyd and that of Adama Traore, a young man who died in a police station in July of 2016.

The death of George Floyd was a catalyzer for momentum that already existed in each country, but up until then had had a smaller audience. The momentum of protests, organizations like Black Lives Matter in France, or the U.K., or in Germany. So there was an international dimension. And each time these protests were addressing local issues as well. In that context, many governments reacted by explaining that the situation in the United States was racially different from their national local situations.

The French government, for instance, did not speak on the death of George Floyd, doubtless because it was afraid of having to face questions about the behavior of the French police, and in particular police brutality. That is also a very important issue there. And then beyond the question of the police, there are other issues – broader ones, related to systemic racism in important sectors in our society in Europe, including access to the labor market, access to the housing market, and other areas, such as health. We have seen this in the pandemic, but there are also questions of access to university, and school, and access to education in general.

All of these issues – all these questions were raised with a renewed strength as of in these past months. And I think it's very important not to let this strength fade away. We must do something with it. This need for a new antiracist momentum has itself a dimension of international coordination. It's striking to see how, taken in isolation, the different national governments have official policies against racism. But often, these policies are passive, half-asleep, and they do not benefit from a great political centrality.

In elections, for instance, issues of antiracism are almost never raised in this context. In France these are very marginal issues in the general, the widespread political debate. And I think this is an opportunity to include these issues in the democratic conversation. That is even more the case for issues that are systematically left out of the democratic debate. For instance, the question of the police, the issue of the relationship between the police and the population, the issue of maintaining order, the question of the weapons that police have at their disposal.

These questions are never discussed democratically, and they are left to the administration or to the police hierarchy, to the leaders of the police, to ministers of the interior. I think it is essential that police issues become democratic issues, that they be discussed with the population, with associations, organizations. They be discussed between politicians, and that these questions and these issues be present in the platforms of candidates in national and European elections.

Another point I believe to be important is the question of international coordination. To begin with, with the U.S. and Europe, these questions in fact are often addressed nationally. Maintaining order, for example, is a national prerogative. Yet, this issue, politically and democratically, could be debated at the international level, comparing, examining what's done elsewhere, trying to draw inspiration from foreign examples – including examples from our neighbors when neighboring countries do better than we do, I'm thinking of France in this example, when it comes to this issue.

Another important issue is the issue of measuring racism and discrimination. In Europe, there is often a great deal of delay in this area. In France, for instance, we do not have statistical data – at least, in a sufficient amount – to measure, or compare, or to undertake a transformative approach to achieve reasonable goals. And so I think it is also useful to reflect on research, the collection of statistical data at the European level, which could be compared to what is already available in the United States.

The last point I would like to raise refers to the need in Europe to have a coordinator – a European coordinator on the issue of racism, and particularly on the issue of racism against Black people. That question has not been sufficiently addressed in Europe. It has been perhaps considered as an issue that's – in the past racism is a problem which sometimes is thought to be something from the past. But on the contrary, it is very present in our societies. And racism against Black people is a reality in Europe as well.

And a final final point, there is also the question of history. Issues related to slavery, those are also European questions. They're not only American ones. France, Great Britain were powers which organized trafficking in slaves, and to organized slavery. And many other European countries also benefited from slavery and from colonization in Africa and in parts of the rest of the world. And so that question also deserves to be better addressed in school curricula, as well as in museums, in public recognition of history being not only a history of the light but also of the darkness. It is part of the European history. It is different from the history of the United States, but it is also important. And there is work to be done there as well.

For instance, when it comes to returning the looted objects to Africa – objects which were taken during colonization, so that is not something that you might immediately associate with the death of George Floyd, but it is also important. It is something which is extremely important for much of the population of Europe, the non-White population needs this in order to feel that they are equal with the rest of the population, to feel that they are recognized, and also so that they can contribute the wealth of their culture and their heritage from Africa and from the rest of the world – how they can contribute this to the European culture in general.

That is a very broad program. It won't be achieved in just a couple of years. It's very ambitious. But I think that the members of parliament and the members of the Congress in the U.S. have a historic mission to address these very serious issues, which make the daily life of their Black fellow citizens, or their non-White fellow citizens, that is to say millions of people in both Europe and the U.S.

ARENA: (Through interpreter.) Thank you very much, Mr. Ndiaye.

I'd like to give the floor now to Hilary Shelton, who is director of the NAACP's Washington Bureau. He is senior vice president for advocacy and policy. You have the floor, sir.

SHELTON:

I'd like to, again, thank the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office of the High Commission on National Minorities, the Helsinki Commission, and others involved in bringing these issues to the attention of the world, quite frankly. The deeper we've gotten into these concerns, the more we realize that the borders for police brutality and misconduct are not limited to the borders of the United States. As we raise issues throughout the country and throughout the world, we're seeing that more and more we need national standards to address these concerns.

So with that, I would also like to thank our U.S. champions, people like Congressman Alcee Hastings, Gwen Moore, Shelia Jackson Lee, Senator Ben Cardin, Congresswoman Bass, and our other friends, including President Kristen Clarke, who's already spoken, to this forum. Too many names have come up. And as the NAACP begins to look at these issues, we realize how important it's been to be what we are for the last 111 years, addressing issues and concerns of policing, among others.

As was mentioned, I'm Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP's Washington Bureau, and senior vice president for policy and advocacy. The NAACP is the United States' oldest and largest grassroots-based civil rights organization. That is, we were founded in 1909, and even to this day we stay true to our mission of fighting racism and racial bias in all of its forms. We currently have more than 2,200 membership units in all 50 states throughout the United States, but we also still have branches on military bases in places like Italy, Germany, Korea, and Japan.

Sadly, racism still exists in the United States today, as it does across the globe. Daily we find ourselves faced with the challenges pertaining to combatting police brutality, racial profiling, and other forms of racism. One question we constantly grapple with is how we, as people across the globe, can combat law enforcement misconduct and police brutality. One of our first tasks is to identify diversity among us, by this mean diversity based on one's race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, culture, and other differences. Equally we have succinctly, yet inclusively, defined racism and xenophobia, as well as defined the problems that are drive by racism and other biases, including police brutality, misuse of force, and other forms of discrimination.

These definitions must be known and understood by not only the perpetrators of the problem – our police officers too often in these cases – but also those who are victims and the victim's families. As we've looked at the issues across the country, we decided that it was important that we go back to the NAACP's work on police brutality issues going way back. The names that came to mind were names like Rodney King. For those who are not familiar, Rodney

King was nearly beaten to death by police officers and can still be sadly watched on video. We argue that perhaps that is the reason that so much attention has been brought, because of the new technologies allowing us to see what's going on and see that sometimes our police officers are not honest. Sometimes when they file their reports about what happened on the streets when an unarmed person is killed, that it does not add up.

Those police officers that nearly beat Rodney King to death said that indeed he was struggling and trying to get away from them and reaching for their guns. But there was a man across the street – we're talking about the early 1990s, in which we did not have video cameras on our cellphones, we did not have the kind of tools like video camera on lamp poles and otherwise surveilling certain areas. As a matter of fact, it just so happened during this time period a White man, standing on the balcony of his apartment, utilizing an eight millimeter camera, was able to shoot the police officers – that is, film – the police officers as they beat Rodney King to the ground, and continued to beat him, breaking bones and causing other major damage to him for no good reason at all.

Rodney King was not armed either. But we know that that was only the beginning of what we saw on video. And sadly, I should say we're grateful that video is coming into play as we look at these issues and challenges across our communities, our country, and, quite frankly, throughout the world. Because we know that the new names that have been added to the list sadly and unfortunately include people like George Floyd and Dontre Hamilton, Jacob Blake and Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, because we know that women are also beaten and shot to death in our communities as well by police officers, even as they are unarmed.

We know about Ahmaud Arbery and Rayshard Brooks, and many, many, many others that we actually have video footage of, sadly and horrifically. But there are those who tell the stories whose names don't come forward because perhaps they don't have the video to be able to address those concerns as well. That's why we're convinced that we need, first, good policy – policy that sets the tone for whatever's going on throughout our society. What we've learned the hard way is that in each of these cases, regarding of how horrific, regardless of how outrageous and unarmed these people were at the time the police officers confronted them, the same story's often told.

A story's told by some spokesperson for that police department that simply says: We're saddened for the family, for the loss of life of the person the police officers killed, but we also have to recognize that these police officers did not do anything wrong. They acted within the confines of the policies that are forward. We would argue those policies are, quite frankly, unacceptable. They are underestimating and they do not provide the real protection that the American people need regardless of our diversity, the color of our skin, our other differences.

So we knew we needed to introduce legislation to begin moving these issues forward. To begin providing some outline, some mandates for how law enforcement must act and must treat those that, as the side of our police officers' cars say here in the United States, to serve and protect. But too often we see that skewed as the problems and concerns of our communities across the country end up being directly tied back to those police officers.

It raises a real quagmire in our minds. That is, why is it that police officers that are paid for with tax dollars, those who are trained utilizing tax dollars, those who should be held accountable for tax dollars simply are not? We're seeing too many cases where the police officer was brought to justice, the issue was raised, time was allowed to pass, and as the grand jury in too many of these cases end up rendering their decision of whether that police officer should stand trial or not, we realize that even that part of the program was jury-rigged.

What that means is, is that when you have a tool, like a grand jury, that is utilized to be able to assess whether or not charges should be brought under the extraordinary circumstances of a police officer utilizing deadly force on an unarmed citizen, we know that this extreme circumstance, extraordinary circumstances. But when we see prosecuting attorneys offices actually utilizing that as a tool to further confuse the issue by not narrowing the facts of the case, and actually putting before a 12 member or more grand jury, all of the evidence – with no tool for being able to isolate or otherwise form that evidence clearly and succinctly – the decisions are always going to come out have that they don't have or they disagree over whether there was a basis for prosecution.

That's why we're delighted that our friend Karen Bass and so many of other of our friends at the Congressional Black Caucus,, Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Caucus, and other progressive caucuses throughout the U.S. Congress supported legislation to actually provide a very comprehensive approach to police brutality and misconduct. A comprehensive approach that would deal with everything from racial profiling, teaching police officers how to carry out their responsibilities without racially profiling, learning the tough lesson. And that tough lesson is, is that if you have racial profiling, if police officers are targeting our citizens simply because of the color of their skin, the trust and perception of integrity necessary for effective policing will not carry forward.

And as such, our law enforcement entity will be even more unsuccessful. We've talked to those who won't call police when they hear sound in their alley, fearful that the police will come with their guns blazing, even as a 14-year-old kid probably decides to sneak behind the house and smoke a cigarette against their parent's will, or other challenges along those lines. That's why, again, we are excited that we're moving in the right direction, and the U.S. House of Representatives now passed legislation that reflects the NAACP's policy concerns, as we have held hearings throughout the country.

We divide the United States into seven regions. We have held hearings in communities all over from those in New York to those in California, from those in Washington state to those in Miami, Florida. And we've learned some tough lessons. What we've learned is that regardless of the communities, regardless of the twang – that is, whether you speak with a New York accent or a Southern twang – everyone was saying the same thing. That by virtue of the color of their skin they felt that law enforcement was unfair. They're more likely to pull their guns out faster and squeeze the trigger a lot more quickly.

We're concerned because what we're seeing as we focus in on policing that the focus is not as much on tools of carrying out their responsibilities that are not deadly. The guns that they carry are the most high-quality. They're the most progressive – or, the most advanced armament

that you've ever seen. As a matter of fact, we actually have policy between our armed forces that are supposed to provide combat protection for our shores, they are given to local police departments to actually control local citizens.

So let me say thank you for the opportunity to be here with you, for the opportunity to raise the concerns of the NAACP and the communities we serve. We have over 500,000 members, as I had mentioned, 2,200 membership units. And regardless of who we're talking to, sadly, we're hearing the same stories. So with that, we look forward to working with you to help put a real focus on this new policy we think will be very, very helpful, and to make sure that not only the United States but also as your jurisdiction carries you throughout the world, that we can again make not only our citizens safer, but we can also make our law enforcement more productive by strengthening their trust and integrity that's absolutely necessary. Thank you very much.

LOPEZ: We thank you, Director Shelton, for your strong remarks.

I think we are now ready to hear from Commission Dalli, our equality portfolio commissioner. If you are there, Commissioner Dalli, the floor – the floor goes to you. You are connected. There you go.

LOPEZ: Yes, we hear you. Now you go. Commissioner Helena Dalli, the floor is yours.

DALLI: OK. Sorry about that. And again, I thank you for organizing this timely seminar.

The death of George Floyd raised the anger against racial injustice among Americans and Europeans alike, and led to mass protests and condemnation of police brutality and human rights violations. In European Union, as well as in the United States – sorry, are you not hearing me?

LOPEZ: Yes, we do. We do. We follow you. We're following your presentation.

DALLI: . In the European Union as well as well as the United States, people of all ethnic origins and from all walks of life have come together to call for justice. Justice is called for by millions of people all over the world who continue to face racial discrimination, or any other form of discrimination which prevents them from enjoying their human rights in full. This underlines how racial inequality is still deeply entrenched throughout the world.

Like in the United States, healing divisions and embracing diversity is at the foundation of our union. And we are in no way immune to the phenomena of racism and discrimination. Today's meeting is a genuine expression of our common goal to address racism and systematic discrimination that has beset our societies. And I warmly welcome the initiative by the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress and U.S. Helsinki Commission to intensify cooperation on these issues.

The transatlantic partnership is founded on shared values, such as the promotion of human rights, democracy, equality before the law, and freedom of expression. In our bilateral relationship we engage in robust and frank discussions and exchanges on best practices and policies to combat racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. This is a key feature of the human rights consultation with our strategic partners.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore, has an open channel of communication and exchange with the U.S. Department of State on human rights issues, including on the implications of COVID-19 for human rights, as well as for issues such as accountability of security force race police violence towards people of color, and the importance of peaceful protests. The meeting of EU Ambassador Stavros Lambrinidis and the EU 27 heads of mission in Washington, with members of the Congressional Black Caucus on the 8th September was very productive, with concrete ideas that could be taken up by the EU and 27 member states' embassies in the U.S.

I thank you for your suggestions and letter to President von der Leyen. This meeting gives me the opportunity to reiterate that the EU is deeply committed to fight against racism, discrimination, and xenophobia wherever it occurs, be it at home or beyond. At home, and as expressed in President von der Leyen's state of the union speech on the 16th of September, the time has come to build a truly antiracist union, one that goes from condemnation to action. On Friday the 18th September, the Commission adopted its EU Antiracism Action Plan for 2020-2025. And this is not the first time we have addressed racism in the EU. But the action plan steps up our action with the ambition and the objectives to truly change the tide.

The action plan acknowledges that racism is not only perpetrated by individuals, but can also be structural, which can be found in every area of life. Racism, therefore, needs to be addressed at all levels of society and governance. The biggest challenge with structural racism is that there is no single person or entity responsible for it. We all are. This is why the action plan combines targeted measures and equality mainstreaming into all EU policies, legislation, and funding programs. It also makes emphasis on taking an intersectional approach to addressing racism and discrimination.

In terms of specific measures, the action plan foresees that the European Commission will ensure that member states fully implement relevant EU law and further strengthen the legal framework, if needed. This could apply in particular in the areas not yet covered by the nondiscrimination legislation, such as law enforcement. The Commission also calls on member states to maximize the use of all the tools at their disposal – in particular, the funding available under the next long-term EU budget and the next-generation EU. The action plan brings together stakeholders at all levels to fight racism in Europe more effectively, including through adoption of national action plans against racism.

Another key challenge that has been recognized is the importance of promoting diversity and countering discriminatory attitudes by law enforcement authorities, including police forces. With the support of EU agencies, such as the agency for fundamental rights and the agency for law enforcement training, member states are encouraged to step up efforts to prevent

discriminatory attitudes by law enforcement authorities, and to boost the credibility of law enforcement work against hate crimes.

Our Antiracism Action Plan also emphasizes the importance for the internal and external actions of the EU to be coherent and to mutually reinforce each other when it comes to preventing and combatting racism. And the soon-to-be adopted action plan for 2020-2024 on human rights and democracy, specific action on the exchange of best practices with partner countries on strategies and policies to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance will be continued.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is central to the EU's fight against racism and the cooperation and in the political dialogues with regional and international organizations, such as, amongst others, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the African Union, and the United Nations. Financial support to combat all forms of racial discrimination is a fundamental objective, as well as a crosscutting issues in all EU development and cooperation strategies, and in its financing instruments, and will be continued in the forthcoming neighborhood development international cooperation instrument.

The EU provides support to civil society organizations by fighting racism. It also supports international organizations such as the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner or Human Rights and regional organizations, such as the OSCE, as well as partner countries with, amongst other things, awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building activities that address and fight racial discrimination.

The Commission adopted the action plan last Friday. Now the action must come. From this day on, we will monitor the implementation of the various measures. If we are to make a tangible difference with our work, we know that we have to broaden our approach. The Commission will therefore hold regular dialogue with you, European Parliament, but also with member states, communities, businesses, civil society, and academia. This will form part of the duties of the coordinator for antiracism, who will be newly appointed.

In closing, let me assure you of the EU's deep and strong commitment to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia wherever it occurs – at home and abroad. Our founding treaties that adhere to the charter of the United Nations clearly demonstrate our commitment to work for the elimination of discrimination of any grounds and all spheres of our external cooperation. And the transatlantic partnership is indispensable in this work. I thank you.

ARENA: Thank you, Helena Dalli, for your message. I give the floor to Radoslaw Sirkorski – (continues through interpreter) – president of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the United States of America.

SIKORSKI: Hello, everyone. Thank you very much for involving the transatlantic dialogue in this meeting. I'd like to thank the chairs of the LIBE and DROI committee. Let's also recognize the participation of Jim Costa, who is my co-chair on the other side of the Atlantic, and other colleagues with whom we've been working on the TLD. I'd like to take this

opportunity to encourage more members of the House of Representatives to – and Senators – to take part in the transatlantic dialogue.

Everything that needed to be said has already been said, so I just want to associate myself with what's been said. Indeed, nondiscrimination is an integral part of our shared values. And I'd just like to add that populist and authoritarian trends that we've been witnessing in our societies are almost always accompanied by racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other bigotry. And we need to exorcise those things from our societies. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Thank you. I give the floor now to Shelia Jackson Lee from the Judiciary Committee. You have the floor.

LEE: Madam Chair. Thank you so very much for this opportunity to participate in the joint meeting of the U.S.-European Union Joint Meeting on Racial Equity, Equality, and Justice. Let me thank the presenters. Thank you for allowing me this intervention. Let me also acknowledge Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Wilson, and House and Senate members on the Helsinki Commission, for which I have participated in for many, many years.

This effort is long overdue, and I was delighted to hear of the budget and process that you're utilizing to deal with the questions of racial equity and justice for the nations in the European Union. And I extend our hand in friendship and partnership, and also collaboration and support and advocacy for your work. And we implore you to support the efforts that are being done here in the United States.

I'll mention very briefly the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which obviously is a reimagining and a reassessment of police community relationships, addressing the question of the continuous interactions with Black men and police in the United States, correcting the training of policing, ending racial profiling, stopping chokeholds, ending no-knock warrants, and many others we think will be good for the community and the dignity of all people and police.

But the overall umbrella of this effort is the legislation that was introduced originally in 1989 – H.R. 40, the Commission to Study Reparations. We have, since the passing of John Conyers and his designating me to continue this journey, we've now introduced this legislation for a number of years but now there is a new breath of fresh air. It is a commission to study and develop reparation proposals. It is to assess and to recognize and apologize for the original sin of this country, slavery. My ancestors, the descendants of enslaved Africans, were held in bondage for over 200 years. Our freedom was bifurcated first in 1863 by President Lincoln, and then delayed until 1865, when General Granger arrived in Texas. A quarter of a million slaves had been enslaved for two years.

Over the years, 4,000 descendants of enslaved Africans have been hung. We've had stark disparities in the economy, in health care, and education. We were under Jim Crow segregation laws in the 20th century. We were periodically brutalized through that throughout the South. Many people will remember the brutality of Emmett Till, the killings of the civil rights soldiers, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I would include the assassination

of Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy as well. Many unnamed persons lost their lives in this civil rights movement. And certainly just recently we lost the beloved John Robert Lewis.

This legislation is crucial to pass. It deals with restoration and repair. Restoration because of the apology, repair because it provides for the development of proposals. It has been endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In a few minutes will be endorsed by athletic leaders across the nation – the Players Coalition, Danny Glover, John Legend, academic leaders across the nation. It is a must in this nation to begin to set up a commission that will be appointed by the leadership of the House and Senate and the president, and allowing scholars from around the nation to develop how we should proceed in the schism of equality between the descendants of enslaved Africans, Black Americans, and the majority of other Americans - the only group that has been held in bondage.

And as you well know, the slave trade – the trade of Europeans and the U.S. began with gold and spices. But when they found out that it was much more lucrative to sell slaves, both the U.S. and Europe benefitted financially from the transatlantic slave effort. And so this legislation – we ask for the collaboration of the EU to endorse H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals, as have over 150 members of the United States Congress, coming from regions around the nation – conservative, moderates and liberals. We believe this legislation should receive a markup and go to the floor.

I want to thank Chairman Nadler of the full Committee of the Judiciary from which this legislation has come – and a member of the Helsinki Commission Chairman Cohen, whose subcommittee this legislation has gone through. We've worked together and had a dynamic and powerful hearing in 2019. A number of us returned to Africa for the year of return in June of 2019, a very powerful experience led by the Congressional Black Caucus. But today we hope that you will understand the vitality and the vigorousness of the need for the passage of H.R. 40, and the international support of this legislation, and the overall umbrella of civil rights legislation on repair and restoration in our nation.

This legislation must be endorsed internationally. And as I might remind you, reparations is an international concept of law. And so we are building on that, drawing upon our international understanding of the law, to fix an era, to repair damage. That is what we're attempting to do, and to correct what has never been corrected.

Finally let me indicate, as many of you know, reparations has been dealt with internationally. We've dealt with it here in the United States when we interned the Japanese. We've dealt with it when we did experiments on African American men at Tuskegee. And we've done it for a number of other heinous tragedies here in the United States.

And I thank you for allowing me this intervention and this passion. I thank you for exhibiting it. And I look forward to our collaboration and support of each other's proposals. I yield back. Thank you.

ARENA: Thank you very much. So now I will give the floor to – (continues through interpreter) – I'm going to open the floor now to the members of the Parliament and Congress. We have members from the LIBE Committee here and the Subcommittee on Human Rights. We

have members of the Congress here too. So we'll be following a certain order of the political groups. I'm going to begin with Isabel Wiseler from the EPP and the Subcommittee of Human Rights. And then Maria Walsh from the EPP and the LIBE Committee. And then the representatives of Congress.

I have to be very strict with the timing, so you have only one minute each. Thank you.

WISELER: (Through interpreter.) Thank you very much. I think the awareness of this is the most important thing. And I believe that there is heightened awareness of the issue at the moment. And hopefully we will use this opportunity and work with the United States in this committee. I would like to thank all the people present. And I would like to say that as a politician, we have a great deal of responsibility in the language that we use and the underlying issues. We have to be very uncompromising and not use language which goes in the mistaken direction. Mrs. Merkel during the German presidency has said: Be careful with the language that you use. And the language used by the extreme right, that we shouldn't play their game.

When I hear about the difficulties in the United States, they are similar to what we have here. At least, underlying systemic factors. And that's why we've got to be very aware. I know I haven't got much time, but I would like to thank everyone for all that they're doing. OK.

ARENA: (Through interpreter.) Thank you, Isabel.

Maria Walsh now for the LIBE Committee.

WALSH: Thank you very much, Chair, colleagues, Commissioner Dalli, and our special guests today. Chair, I'm not too sure of my time, so I'm going to carry on until you tell me to stop. (Pause.) Are we live?

ARENA: Yes, go ahead.

WALSH: Picking up from my colleague from the EPP group, I just want to stress the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the symptoms and the disease of racism that exist in both European and American societies. Racist and discriminatory behaviors are deeply embedded in social, financial, and political institutions, and impact our policymaking. Our citizens are constantly affected by racism in their areas – in access to employment, health care, housing, financing, education and, of course, violence.

The conflict between our values of equality and the reality of ingrained racism cannot be ignored. And it is time to acknowledge and act against the prevalence of racism and racial discrimination to really consider what we can do in unison. I'm therefore delighted to have the opportunity to engage with our U.S. counterparts on this today.

ARENA: Thank you, Maria. So I give the floor to Costa Jim – Jim Costa from the Congress.

COSTA: Thank you very much.

COSTA: Well, I want to thank the European Parliament Committees on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and the Subcommittee on human rights, with the United States Congress and the Helsinki Commission for allowing me to participate today. This effort, dealing with the declaration of racial equality – equity, equality, and justice, with the goal of reinforcing the partnership between the United States and between the European Parliament to combat racism and systemic discrimination I think is important and obvious, and it's very timely.

My colleagues, European parliamentary co-chair of the transatlantic legislators dialogue, my friend Sirkorski, commented on the importance of the transatlantic legislators dialogue, among other groups that really are the link, I think, and the glue that keeps together our partnership between Europe and the United States, the bonds that are the cornerstone of Western democracies, that share in common the values of human rights, as well as attempting to ensure that we, in fact, not only reflect those, but in actions we deal with challenges we face today.

I think Representative Shelia Jackson Lee talking not only historically but in terms of current efforts to, in fact, addresses these issues in the United States, and the need to work together. I think my colleague, the gentleman from Parliament, Sirkorski, has commented on the importance of our efforts together. Certainly, the Helsinki Commission, transatlantic legislators dialogue, the European Parliament, the United States Congress, and we must get greater participation – Representative Keating and co-chairs of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Environment, along with Congressman Wilson and others, to clearly understand the importance of this partnership.

The United States and Europe are both in the midst of important discussions –

on trying to deal with the troubling aspects of our history and the current efforts of populism and nationalism that somehow continue to extend the systemic racism. We must keep the lines of communication open between our legislators. This forum does that. I will continue to work on my part to ensure that we do everything possible to address these challenges, both in the United States and with our alliance and our partnership among our European colleagues. And I thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate at this time.

ARENA: Thank you. Thank you very much. I give the floor to Sanchez Amor and after to Birgit Sippel. So, Sanchez Amor, you have the floor.

AMOR: Yes? Thank you. Thank you, Maria.

(Continues through interpreter.) I will speak Spanish. I would like to welcome our American colleagues, Mr. Hastings, Roger Wicker, Mr. Cardin, and everyone.

There are two complementary approaches. One is the main issue of racism, and the other is the one raised by Ms. Walsh, the symptoms, the microphenomenon. I think the global issue allows us for making big speeches, but if we look at the facets of racism we can act politically. Over the last few years I have done this in the area of police violence. We've seen this in racist police violence in the U.S. I sent a letter to the Helsinki Commission in 2016. I made a public

declaration back in 2018 and 2019. I have prepared to have a mission of the Parliamentary Assembly to the U.S. And everything seems to have remained the same.

And I think we need to focus on the micro, as Representative Jackson Lee said, with deep-seated reform of police protocol, practices, the selection and training of police personnel, because we understand that the problem in the United States has to do with the constant presence of weapons in the street. And so I call upon our colleagues to go beyond the big speech about racism in general to examine the facets of racism because in each of those facets we can politically within our parliaments. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Thank you, Nacho. I give the floor now to Isabel Santos. Birgit Sippel is not connected, so I give the floor to Isabel Santos.

SANTOS: It's alright. So I would like to congratulate you for this initiative that is very important. I can speak in Portuguese.

(Continues through interpreter.) I'd like to thank you. I'd like to thank the chair of the DROI subcommittee for this absolutely essential initiative and for launching this dialogue, and continuing to dialogue, in fact, about this issue, with the subcommittee and the U.S. Congress. I would like to thank Jim Costa for his statements. And I'd like to thank all of the colleagues I've been able to work with within the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE that are members of the Helsinki Commission. And I'd also like to welcome Mr. Hastings, who has also played a very important role and with whom we have been working for several years.

I think everything has already been said, but I think that the problem today is a structural one in our societies. And what we need to do is relaunch a dialogue in a new way. We need to change and improve best practices to have a more efficient fight against these structural challenges, because it's a form of constant aggression. And having said that, I think something which was said earlier had to do with the issue of protocol and training of police personnel. Because those police protocols should serve to fight against the problems we're facing today. We need to have a coordinating body to combat racism. That's something which interests me particularly.

And I think that at the international level we must continue having this dialogue and exchanging best practices, because that's something which so far has been lacking. Another element which has been raised is that we need shared criteria in the way that we manage data related to these phenomena, because having that shared approach would allow us to have reliable information, which in turn will allow us to implement political measures. Thank you.

ARENA: So I give the floor to Garcia Sylvia.

GARCIA: Hello. This is Sylvia Garcia.

ARENA: Yes, it's OK for us. But I think it's better for the translation that you leave the mask. Thank you.

GARCIA: Oh. I'm sorry. We were advised to wear them even when we're in our offices. So excuse me. But thank you so much and thank you for your indulgence.

Thank you to Chairman Hastings and members of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, Chairman Cohen, and all my colleagues at the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties, and of course to all the members of the European Parliament for hosting today's historic joint meeting. I regret that we're not able to meet under better circumstances amid the pandemic, but I thank you all for your leadership and for your commitment to fighting racism and achieving equality and justice in response to the international George Floyd protests.

As a person of faith, I believe the responsibility falls on each and every one of us to ensure that everyone is treated as a child of God. However, the reality is George Floyd was not treated as a child of God when he repeatedly said, "I can't breathe." Unfortunately, in America and some parts around the world you are oftentimes treated unfairly and discriminated against if you are Black and, yes, brown also. The Latino community is also subjected to and is all too familiar with the impact of police brutality. Driving while brown can be as deadly as driving while Black. As elected officials, it is therefore important that we reform our civil rights statutes to protect human beings who just want to live, and live without fear.

That is why I was a proud original co-sponsor of the George Floyd Act to ensure systematic changes on all issues relating to racism, police brutality, and racial profiling can come to an end. And today I'm proud to be joining my colleagues in declaration of racial equity, equality, and justice, with a goal of reaffirming our U.S.-EU Parliamentary coordination to combat racism and systematic discrimination. I know I'm limited on time, but I look forward to our continuous joint efforts to end racial determination in all areas, so that everyone has a seat at the table and that we all are truly treated as children of God. Thank you.

ARENA: Thank you. I give the floor to Kathleen Chay (ph) from Renew. Just for one minute. And after, to Ms. Rafaela. So, Kathleen, you have the floor.

CHAY (PH): Thank you very much, colleagues. I'm very grateful to be here today. And I'm also grateful for the global Black Lives Matter movement for pushing us to take action. But now I want to address very fast as I can what's a deeply transatlantic issue – holding social media companies accountable for hate on their platforms. Because these platforms are not neutral, we all know that. They have algorithms that are biased towards hateful content. And on both sides of the Atlantic, they should be regulated in a way that protects vulnerable citizens. Because when two people are killed in Kenosha, Wisconsin through a militia that is organized on Facebook it is simply not enough to have Mr. Zuckerberg apologizing the next day.

Social media companies should shoulder more responsibility. And this approach is included in the EU's new action plan, and our digital services act will hopefully go as far as putting fines on platforms if they do not take adequate action. The process of fines, of course, can be a politically contentious issue, but I was very concerned to hear President Trump calling

Commissioner Vestager the woman who hates America for suing American companies. But this is not a Europe or America issue. We really should join forces to protect our most vulnerable citizens because I believe that we as a transatlantic platform of legislators, have a unique opportunity to try to unify our approaches for a better and more equal world. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Thank you, Kathleen. I give the floor to Samira Rafaela.

RAFAELA: Yes. Thank you very much, Chair. So first of all, as co-president of the Antiracism and Diversity Intergroup, I am honored to join this exchange of views with the U.S. Helsinki Commission. And even though the chairman, Representative Alcee Hastings, can't be here, I really want to show and express my appreciation. Ms. Gwen Moore, it's great to see you again, and to the other Helsinki Commissioners and members of Congress, welcome.

So racism and systematic discrimination do not end on the shores of the Atlantic. And we stand with you in the fight against racism and systemic discrimination. And this is a battle that asks for joint effort. And I therefore welcome all your efforts on racial justice, especially your letter to the president. And last Friday the European Commission presented the first EU Antiracism Action Plan. And therefore I wonder, do you agree that we need a U.S.-EU joint action plan against racism, and a plan that includes dedicated funding and support for civil society and also including how we are going to collect data, and how we are going to exchange best practices when it comes to good policing. And lastly, what can we, representatives here in Europe, learn from you, our American colleagues? Thank you.

ARENA: Thank you. I give the floor to Dina Titus.

TITUS: And thank you for including me today.

You know, every government and nation around the world has some kind of history or current set of circumstances to address when it comes to the issues of discrimination. But public and private, personal recognition of this basic fact is the very first step in our abilities as policymakers to take action to make the communities that we represent more fair and more just. The US can't push for ideals of inclusion and opportunity around the world, however, if we don't also do that at home. Yet, many of my colleagues continue to turn away and deny these realities. And that's why it is so important for legislative bodies to step up, even when leadership may be opposed.

For example, at the highest level of our government, some electeds – fed by the president – have repeated xenophobic and hateful rhetoric about the coronavirus and its origins, to turn attention away from their own failures to adequately respond to this global health crisis. This has resulted in a rise in cases of harassment and assaults targeting Asian-Americans over the last few months. In response just this past week, on a largely Democratic vote, the House of Representatives felt compelled to pass a resolution to denounce anti-Asian sentiment and rhetoric.

Similarly, the high-profile murder of George Floyd and others at the hands of law enforcement has been met by Democrats in Congress pressing forward on major reforms in terms of policing, and efforts to address other criminal justice issues related to things like marijuana, which have had an outsized impact on the minority community. Yet again, we have a president and Republican Party who don't believe or will not acknowledge that racial injustice, exists in this country. Recent remarks by the president to journalist Bob Woodward, asking about issues of White privilege, were met with dismissal and derision.

There are other perhaps less obvious policy areas where we must address systemic racism. I sit on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which recently passed through a major package. That legislation includes provisions specific to prioritizing the needs of low-income and underserved communities in transportation planning. Also contracting with women and minority-owned businesses, because these communities often lack the access and opportunity to do that because of underinvestment in those communities, which exacerbates racial and economic justice.

And certainly the issues of environmental injustice are well-documented, with numerous cases of hazardous waste, or power plants being located near disadvantaged communities, resulting, for example, in higher asthma rates among children of color, or lower property values in those communities, and discrimination in education must also be addressed.

The list goes on, but we can work together to address these issues if we acknowledge the history, listen to civil society, support an independent press, work within multinational institutions, and ensure our foreign policy responds to and helps fight systemic discrimination.

ARENA: Thank you very much.

I give the floor to Jaak Madison.

MADISON: Thank you very much for an interesting debate it's been today. And also I have to remind, I'm very sorry for the incident in June when a Black police officer were killed during those so-called peaceful demonstrations. If I hear all those things about White supremacy and White privilege, I'm just very confused that how is it possible in the U.S. to have two terms Black president? If I was checking the facts before the meeting today, I found information that insurance companies have announced that the damages that have done during those so-called peaceful demonstrations have been over \$1 billion. So I know that I'm a minority in this house in this question, but everybody has the right to protest – to protest for their rights. But nobody has the right for the violent protesters, for the criminal demonstrations, and to destroy the private property, other lives, and kill the people. That's not the right for those demonstrations. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Thanks. I give the floor to Ștefănuță, Nicolae.

ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ: Yes, definitely. Thank you so much.

ARENA: But we need to see you. We don't see you. So without seeing you it's not possible to interpret you. So I think it's better to have your camera.

ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ: Not even in English?

ARENA: No, I prefer – because we have some members they are not speaking English. So we need the interpreters. So without camera, it is not possible.

ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ: OK, I'm sorry. Then I yield my time.

ARENA: Do you have a camera or not?

ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ: Not possible from the device.

ARENA: Thank you. Sorry. Sorry.

We'll go to Mr. Gregory Meeks.

MEEKS: Can you hear me? Great. I wish I had more than a minute so I could address the prior speaker on what he talked about in the United States. But I'm not going to do that here. I'm going to stick to my script. I'm the co-chair of the EU Caucus, as well as a member of several caucuses and groups promoting the transatlantic relationship and welcome the formal introduction of these topics into our work. The reality has always been there. In Europe, as in the United States, our commitments to equality are not always lived up to. But the law is on the side of the individual. Our democracies together, despite our flaws, is what makes us different from Russia and China.

As a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I look forward to continuing to help young people from underrepresented communities get their first steps in foreign affairs. The Rangel Fellowship is one such formalized pathway. But informal decisions for internships, opportunities to testify, and even the structure of our State Department in the United States has to change. Throughout my career, I've developed strong ties to many member state parliaments, the European Parliament, and I will continue to do so in order to deepen my community around issues and solutions in your countries with your people.

I welcome the steps set forth by the parliament's recent resolution and commission's Antiracism Action Plan. And I know each member state, and even regions within states, have their own histories and battles with racism. It is up to us at the highest levels of the political process to continually be honest with ourselves and each other on how we can improve. Symbols and language matters. Representation matters. Thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to seeing you all soon in person, hopefully, when we get past this pandemic. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Thank you. I give the floor to Salima Yenbou

YENBOU: (Through interpreter.) Thank you, Madam Chair. We know that racism has its roots in slavery and discrimination. I have a question for our American colleagues, how do you view – is there a problem? How do you see our cooperation to move forward together towards a future without racism? As a member of a minority I'm very invested in this question of racism and systemic discrimination. I'm very pleased to see our future cooperation.

For the Commissioner Dalli, I look forward to working at a European and global level on this issue, but it's unfortunate we had to wait for the death of George Floyd for the Commission to finally decide to put forward a strategy to combat racism. However, it is true that it's better later than never. Concretely, what do you plan to do to ensure that minorities are visible within the Commission? What global concrete cooperation do you plan to implement on this topic within your recent antiracism action plan? Do you plan to have a plan of the same scope as the plan to fight for gender equality? And do you plan to address the thorny issue of the restitution of looted art objects to ensure the preservation of art and culture? Thank you.

ARENA: (Through interpreter.) Thank you. I give the floor to Alice Kuhnke.

KUHNKE: (Through interpreter.) Thank you. And thank you for this opportunity to discuss how to strengthen the cooperation between the EU and the USA in the fight against racism. I've listened with great interest to our speakers. It's great to know and feel that jointly we might be able to make a difference that benefits us all.

So what can we do? We can safeguard equal treatment through legislation. But we can learn on how to identify and combat racism through information or education, and we can support and encourage each other in creating societies where racism is not an option. And we can exchange best practice and support each other's efforts to address racism, including an international program.

But a more specific area where I think we could all make a difference is the area of law enforcement. We should introduce proper accountability. How do we make sure that racist behavior in our police forces and the structural discrimination that comes with it is accounted for and dealt with in a constructive and just way? I'm looking forward to this discussion as a first discussion where we really work together and learn from each other. Thank you.

ARENA: Thank you. I'm not sure if there is somebody from the Congress being connected for the moment. So if not, I directly give the floor to our colleague Jorge Buxade Villalba.

If he's not reacting, I give the floor to Assita Kanko.

KANKO: Thank you very much, Chair. And I would like to use this opportunity to say hi to everyone that we met already about this topic, and who are currently watching. And it's a pity we can't actually meet really in this room.

I would like to say that this is a very important topic. And of course, it's urgent to address racism. I would like to stress the fact that as legislators it's very important for us to not

only be talking, but especially be acting. And what is that? What can empower us? Why are some of us who are also from these diversity groups here in this room today? So this is what we should continue pushing for. So we should be evoking real solutions, community policing, jobs, growth, education, opportunities for everyone, family stability with parents playing really their role, and fighting also crime in a certain way because it expands – and as I see as a legislator in Brussels myself – it will expand and then get a lot of young people with difficult socioeconomic background to get into that process again and lose themselves.

So there is much to do. and I'm glad we are in this parliament and have the opportunity to do something. And I want to thank you, again, for giving me the waiting place of Villalba, who's –

ARENA: Thank you, Assita. Thank you. I give the floor to Marc Veasey from the Congress. Not connected? We lost. Yeah, OK. Miguel Urban Crespo.

CRESPO: (Through interpreter.) Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think that the murder of George Floyd shown a spotlight on structural racism in the United States, but also right here in Europe. The racial profiling, the institutional racism, the discrimination against migrants – it's a reality that those have all increased alarmingly, particularly during this pandemic in Europe and in the United States.

And we feel that this is a structural problem, which is also reflected in migrant centers, in the camps of Lesbos or Sabos (ph). Those are open air prisons where fundamental rights do not exist. And that's in the heart of Europe. And that is why I believe, and I'm very – and I welcome the Antiracism Action Plan presented by the European Union. I welcome the clear recognition of the existence of structural institutional dimensions, and historical dimensions as well, of racism in Europe.

But I think that's not enough. The plan should, for instance, be stronger when it comes to measures to counter racist police actions, including specific measures to counter structural racism and to overcome the barriers that migrants face in Europe. Closing the internment centers would be a good measure to combat structural racism in Europe. Thank you.

ARENA: Janina Ochojska. OK, you have the floor.

OCHOJSKA: Yes, thank you. I am speaking Polish.

(Continues through interpreter.) Thanks very much indeed. Ladies and gentlemen, Article 21 of the Charter of the European Union guarantees the right to nondiscrimination. Now, this principle is part of the European operating framework. This problem that we're talking about, of discrimination, is based on missing education, a lack of education. And that's certainly true in Poland, where different groups of people, citizens, are discriminated against – LGBT people, and immigrants. And then it's instrumentalized by people in politics. And they do that for political ends, using political means. That's what we've got to change. And the way to do it is through education.

Can I propose that we work together on this, on both sides of the Atlantic? Combatting discrimination must start with education. We're talking about terrible behavior. And the reason for this terrible behavior is because of a lack of awareness, and lack of an understanding of why these things are happening. It is a terrible problem.

ARENA: Marek Belka

BELKA: Thank you. Well, this discussion shows very clearly that the problem of racism is not just an American phenomenon. It's also endemic for Europe. It seemed to be dormant for many years, but the popular rejection of so-called political correction, which became a deplorable fashion, has unveiled the scale of this problem. Some political leaders, like Trump, are even reinforcing this sentiment. Some consciously raise fears of citizens to solidify their political dominance – like Kaczynski in Poland. To fight racism, it takes a joint effort on the part of the government, civil society, schools, and literally all the institutions as people.

The EU commission's Antiracism Action Plan is right to go in this direction. I hope that very soon we shall be able to rejuvenate the Euro-Atlantic alliance, not only rediscovering our common interests but also, maybe foremost, our common values. Fighting racism can be one of the important pillars of this new coming together. Thank you.

ARENA: Thank you, Marek. I give the floor to Maria Soraya Rodriguez. One minute.

RODRIGUEZ: (Through interpreter.) Thank you, Chair. I'd like to welcome all of the participants in this joint meeting. I think we should maintain this type of work in the future.

As a number of colleagues have said, racism doesn't recognize borders. It doesn't end at a given country's border. And that is why here in the European Union we also must work clearly and committedly to put an end to discrimination and structural racism which are rooted in our societies. In this regard, the antiracism plan recognizes that we have progressed in terms of legal frameworks to combat discrimination, but there are still important gaps that remain, particularly in the implementation of this legislation both within the EU – within individual countries in the EU and within the EU as a whole. Racism creates terrible damage, physical damage, it harms lives, but it also is psychologically damaging. It's harmful for boys and girls to grow up in threatening environments. It means they don't have the same dreams. In the United States, those boys and girls don't have the same nightmare as here. They have nightmares about meeting the police.

ARENA: It connected? So without translation, but it is in English, so we will try, OK?

(Technical difficulties.)

ARENA: It's not possible, yeah. So we will give the floor to Jordi Sole, if connected.

SOLE: Thank you, Chair. In only one minute I just want to stress the fact that we have recently seen many pictures of angry people protesting across the USA against racism and police

misconduct, and rightfully so. But here in the EU, we're also still far away from protecting equality and human dignity for all, and from banishing racism and xenophobia from our societies. And of course, we also have our own problems with police brutality, with attitudes towards migrants, with minority rights, with language equality, for instance. So it's time we put the fight against racism as one of the EU's political priorities. And I think that transatlantic dialogue can help us with that.

I'm glad that the Commission has just put forward a new Antiracist Action Plan. But I think this plan needs to focus more on the need to promote and facilitate learning tools and training for civil servants, especially law enforcement officers, when it comes to nondiscrimination and respect for fundamental rights. We have to tighten rules on fair and democratic policy and combat police misconduct whenever it appears. Because in the end, we cannot be united in the rest of our other goals without taking seriously the protection of our diversity. Thank you.

ARENA: Thank you. Thank you. I give the floor now for the last speaker is Mr. Franz.

FRANZ: Thank you very much, dear colleagues. Today we are witnessing the beginning of the transatlantic constituency, ready to promote stronger than ever equality, equity, and justice for all minorities, and to combat racism and systemic discrimination based on the fundamental belief that all of us were created equal. My people, they are the largest ethnic minority of the European Union. We are more than 6 million. But at the same time, we are one of the most discriminated against minorities.

In September last year I was in Washington and spoke in front the Black Caucus. I shared with them my story. At the moment, the people in the room stood up and said: We have the same experience, and the effects are the same too. It felt like home among the people sharing the same difficulties and bad times, like me and my communities. And I feel the need to tell you we can be stronger together. Why? For too many years we minorities were separated, divided. And this was our weakness. We have to be united against the same phenomenon that harmed, and it's still harming us nowadays: Racism. Nowadays we share the same pain, racist and police violence, scapegoating. I hope we will share a brighter future in a world of equality, in a union of equality.

Honorable speakers, honorable guests, and dear colleagues, I am suggesting to all of you the development of a transatlantic network for combatting racism and discrimination. This can become true. And I'm asking you: Are we ready to put together our skills, passion, knowledge, and experience to build the power that we need to make the change that we want? Thank you.

ARENA: Sorry. But it was really interesting to have your testimony on this. So thank you.

I give the floor to the last speaker from the Congress, is Ted Deutch, if he's connected.

DEUTCH: Great. Well, I appreciate the opportunity to join with you today on this joint meeting on racial equity, equality, and justice. I thank Chairman Hastings for the invitation to

address the Commission and the parliament. The global protests that we've witnessed in response to the death of George Floyd are the result of a long overdue conversation and changes in our society. Our world is in the midst of confronting our long history of racism and injustice impressions that have become ingrained in too many segments of our societies. We have a unique opportunity now to bring about long-overdue change, to condemn and work towards eradicating injustice, racism, and police brutality that plague societies around the world.

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Rayshard Brooks are reminders that law enforcement reform is desperately needed in communities throughout the U.S. and countries around the world, but the reform must be meaningful in order to rebuild the frayed bonds of trust that currently exist. We must be mindful of confronting these injustices that the heightened levels of oppression and discrimination are being felt by religious minorities as well. And we must ensure that strong condemnations of verbal and physical oppression and discrimination are directed at injustices targeting racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. Now is the time for leaders in our global community to confront these injustices. And I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

ARENA: Thank you very much. So now thank you, everybody, for being here and having said your point of view on this. I don't know if there are a lot of questions. I know that there are a lot of statements coming from different people. So I will give the floor to Eamon Gilmore. Eamon Gilmore, a director – (continues through interpreter) – our special representative – so he's our special representative for the EU on human rights. Eamon. I'm really sorry for the delay. But we've got five minutes for you. And then I'll give the floor to one of our U.S. experts who can then maybe follow up on some of the questions asked. But I'd like to give you the floor first. For five minutes, Eamon.

GILMORE: Well, honorable members of the European Parliament and members of the U.S. Congress, and members of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, it is a great privilege for me to join you today for this very important discussion of the first transatlantic interparliamentary debate on the fight against racism and discrimination.

A few years ago I had the great honor to welcome to Dublin, Ireland the great and now lamented Representative John Lewis. And I remember something that he said. He said, "A democracy cannot thrive where power remains unchecked and justice is reserved for a select few. Peace cannot exist where justice is not served." Justice is called for the millions of people all over the world who continue to face racial discrimination, or any other form of discrimination which prevents them from enjoying their human rights in full. Commissioner Dalli has already given you a comprehensive account of what the EU is doing internally to enhance racial equity, equality, and justice, focusing on the new EU Antiracism Action Plan.

My role, as the EU special representative for human rights, focuses on the work that we do outside the European Union. And I am here today because racism is a systemic problem that we must address everywhere in the world. And in addressing that, both I and the European External Action Service, give particular attention to working with the United States. My immediate counterpart in the United States is Assistant Secretary of State Robert Destro. And he

and I have had many discussions since he was appointed last year. In December of last year we co-chaired the first formal EU-U.S. human rights consultations that had taken place since 2015. I spoke to him, indeed, only last week on some issues.

And in the immediate aftermath of the tragic death of George Floyd, I spoke to Assistant Secretary Destro, expressing, of course, our sincere condolences to the family and friends of George Floyd, but also to urge the authorities to investigate to bring those responsible to justice, and to ensure the right to peaceful protest as well as freedom of the press. It was a very frank, open discussion, which touched on issues of police accountability, of police reform on both sides of the Atlantic, and what we can learn from each other in terms of best practice. I know that those aims were also discussed by my friend, the European Union Ambassador to the United States Stavros Lambrinidis, who is also my predecessor in this role. He met with the Congressional Black Caucus.

As Commissioner Dalli mentioned, our 27 member states are currently finalizing a new EU action plan on human rights and democracy, which will cover the next five years, and which will guide our external efforts. The first component of that action plan focuses on protecting people, eliminating inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion. The action plan calls for increased action to combat all forms of discrimination on any grounds, with specific attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

It will also promote specific action on the exchange of best practice with partner countries on strategies and policies to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. This, of course, is building on the EU's longstanding efforts to eliminate inequality, discrimination, and exclusion, which include the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Nondiscrimination, which were adopted in March 2019, complementing our existing sets of thematic human rights guidelines.

These guidelines provide clear guidance, both operationally and politically, for use in the EU's external action, in our bilateral work, and in our multilateral relations, as well as with our engagement with civil society. We place a big emphasis on our multilateral work. And at the United Nations we call consistently for the universal implementation and ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We follow up on the work of the Durban Declaration and the program of action, and, of course, related resolutions at the Human Rights Council of the General Assembly.

And we back all this up with financial support. Combatting all forms of racial discrimination is a fundamental objective as well as a crosscutting issue in all EU development and cooperation strategies and financial instruments. The European Union gives support to civil society organizations fighting racism through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, which is the world's largest program dedicated to human rights and democracy, having spent 1.3 billion euros in the period from 2014-2020, the EU programs for civil society and local authorities on the development cooperation instrument and other geographical instruments. We see civil society as our partner and our ally in fighting racism and building a world where human rights prevail.

Honorable members, the manifestations of inequality and racism are rooted in centuries of enslavement, oppression, and marginalization, and denial of human rights and human expression. By strengthening our transatlantic partnership and tackling racism, and to deepen our ties to exchange best practices and to learn from each other. To that end, I look forward to the recommendations.

ARENA: Thank you very much. I give the floor now to Keenan Keller, the American expert, to answer to some questions. So you have the floor for one minute. And after I will give the floor to Juan Fernando. So Keenan Keller.

KELLER: There's a popular T-shirt in the hip-hop community that says: Across cultures, darker people suffer most. Why? This T-shirt captures, I think, the challenge that we face on the transatlantic level. In having reviewed and been involved in these kinds of conversations for the last 20 years, I think that there is much in the EU Antiracism Action Plan for the United States to consider and to take up in the coming four years.

With respect to policing issues, I think the focus on data, best practices, and support for civil society is something that we have tried to incorporate into the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act. It will be interesting for us to see what happens at a political level when we implement this legislation, and to ensure that we get the kind of cooperation that's necessary between civil society groups and community based groups, and policing and local government groups, to ensure that all voices are heard around the policing issues, which have been at the core of much of the unrest that we've seen in the United States over the last several months.

One of the things that I would say kind of as an overview is that when you look at implementation of the action plan, I think it will be important to have a full concept of restorative justice firmly in place, because that will help you look at how to address antiracism measures as you go through different elements of governmental operations across countries, and will allow you to better address local issues and local history, and the needs of communities. So there is much that we could talk about with respect to all of these issues, and I look forward to engaging with all of you over the coming year. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Thank you. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your words.

(Continues through interpreter.) Thank you very much, everyone, for your patience and for telling us about your different views. This is a universal issue. And racism, unfortunately, is also and has to be beaten wherever it occurs, on all the continents. And we have to cherish our relationship between the European Union and the United States to combat this together.

We have decided to form a joint declaration and set out our political dialogue. And I would add that it's not only a dialogue, but it's also a declaration of action in combatting racism. So thank you, once again. And I'm going to give me colleague, president of the LIBE committee, to conclude. Thank you.

LOPEZ: Certainly, it's been an honor to be part of this dialogue. Mainly spoken by members of the European Parliament and members of the U.S. Congress. There have been also

points being made by the European commission, nothing less, and U.S. Helsinki Commission. But it's been a dialogue between members of houses representing people. Not only that, members of houses of both sides of the Atlantic, in which the whole idea of caring for human rights by law was born in the first place. It's not a coincidence that both the United States and Europe have a long tradition of constitutions, caring about fundamental rights. And the very outstanding principle of fundamental rights is equality before the law and fight against all forms of discrimination, including the heinous, unacceptable form of discrimination which is based on race and ethnic origin.

But racism is alive. On both sides of the Atlantic racism is actually on the rise – not only because of the pandemic, not only because of the crisis, not only because of the inequalities exacerbated by the crisis, they have always been there. But they are on the rise. So it takes responses, law, and action. And that's precisely what we have been talking about. We salute, of course, from the European side, works by the Commission. President von der Leyen committed to appointing an antiracism coordinator for the European Union. And Equality Commissioner Helena Dalli, under the label of a horizontal action plan – which should include bringing the horizontal directive back to life, blocked for 10 years on the council.

I can only – before passing the final floor to our U.S. correspondent, Senator Cardin – I would only add that I hope that whatever the outcome of the next presidential elections, would come along with the renewal of many seats in the houses of U.S. Congress, so this dialogue will continue, will be kept alive as well. And we will be only reinforcing our commitment, our joint commitment, against all forms of racism and discrimination. Thank you.

ARENA: So, Mr. Cardin, you have the floor.

CARDIN: The Congress, the next Congress, will very much be continuing this debate about systemic racism and discrimination. The transatlantic partnership had been the champions for the growth of democracy, of human rights, economic opportunities, and security, which are the same binding principles of the Helsinki Final Act. So this is a very appropriate discussion that we're having today, and I found this extremely helpful.

We have to acknowledge that there has been a rise of nationalism, at the same time a decline of democratic states. That's a very disturbing trend. And with the decline of democratic states, the rise of nationalism, we've seen a rise of hate and violence. What has been unmasked is that we have systemic racism, which we all knew about. And systemic racism and discrimination has now been really shown in full light, so people recognize that we have fundamental issues that we have to deal with.

In the Congress, you've already heard that we are dealing with that through the legislation on justice and policing, dealing with policing issues that involve systemic racism and discrimination. We are also dealing with it in the health care system, in the education system, and in the economic system. In all those areas we need to acknowledge systemic racism and discrimination and deal with those issues. The peaceful protesters have really, I think, struck a chord with the American people and the global community.

And my last point is this: I'm the Special Representative for Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I have seen and documented the rise of consequences of this systemic racism. We have seen firsthand what it has meant as far as hate and violence in our community. I can tell you this, working together, Europeans and the Americans, we can make a major difference. So I look forward to our plan of action. We need to act by our words and our deeds. And together we can make a difference. We can really root out the causes of racism and make a difference for future generations.

So I'm part of this effort. Look forward to our work. And look forward to our statements.

ARENA: Thank you. Thank you for your commitments, and we will do it together. Thank you very much. Bye-bye. Bye-bye, everybody. Thanks.

(Speaks in French.)

[Whereupon, at 1:03 p.m., the meeting ended.]