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Permanent Forum of People of African Descent

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Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations General Assembly** has approved a resolution establishing a **Permanent Forum of People of African Descent**.

The Forum focuses on the **themes of recognition, justice and development**.

Key Points

- **About the Forum:**

- The forum will **provide expert advice** on addressing the challenges of **racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance**.
- It will serve as “**a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent**” and their full inclusion in the societies where they live.
- It was given a **series of mandates**.
 - They include **helping to ensure “the full political, economic and social inclusion of people of African descent,”** and **providing recommendations** on addressing racism **to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, the General Assembly's main committees and UN agencies**.
- The forum will consist of **10 members**:
 - five elected by the **General Assembly from all regions**.
 - five appointed by the **Human Rights Council** following consultations with regional groups and organizations of people of African descent.
- The resolution calls for the **forum's first session to take place in 2022**.

- **People of African Descent:**
 - **About:**
 - There are around **200 million people** identifying themselves as **being of African descent live in the Americas.**
 - **Many millions more live** in other parts of the world, **outside of the African continent.**
 - **Issues:**
 - Whether as **descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants**, they constitute some of the **poorest and most marginalized groups.**
 - They still have **limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social security.**
 - They all too **often experience discrimination** in their access to justice, and **face alarmingly high rates of police violence**, together with **racial profiling.**
 - Furthermore, **their degree of political participation is often low**, both in voting and in occupying political positions.
 - **Related Initiative:**
 - **Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001):**
 - It **acknowledged that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism**, and continue to be victims of their consequences.
 - It **raised the visibility of them** and contributed to a **substantive advancement in the promotion and protection of their rights** as a result of concrete actions taken by States, the United Nations, other international and regional bodies and civil society.
 - In 2014, the General Assembly officially launched the **International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 - 2024).**

Racism

- **About:**

- **Racism**, also called racialism is the **belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”**; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features; and that some races are innately superior to others.
- The term is **also applied to political, economic, or legal institutions and systems** that engage in or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of race or otherwise reinforce racial inequalities in wealth and income, education, health care, civil rights, and other areas.

Xenophobia and Racism mostly overlap, but the **stark difference** is racism is discrimination based on physical characteristics whereas xenophobia is discrimination based on the perception that someone is foreign or originating from another community or nation.

The word Xenophobia originates from the Greek word Xeno.

- Racial discrimination is there in the Indian society.

- **Initiatives Against Racism:**

- **Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001):** Adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.
- Every year, **21st March**, is observed as **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**.
- **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO)** actions against racism through education, the sciences, culture, and communication offer an example of a way forward.
- **Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination 2021:** UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris hosted it in partnership with the Republic of Korea.
- In January 2021, the **World Economic Forum** launched a coalition of organizations committed to improving racial and ethnic justice in the workplace.
- The **‘Black Lives Matter’** protests gained momentum in not only the United States but the whole world. People, as well as many governments across different countries, came forth against the prevalence of racial discrimination worldwide.

- **Provisions Against Racial Discrimination in India:**

- **Article 15, Article 16 and Article 29** of the Constitution of India prohibit discrimination on grounds of “race”.
- Section 153A of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** also refers to “race”.
- India also ratified the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)** in 1968.

Way Forward

- Through **new approaches to intercultural dialogue and learning**, youth and communities can be equipped with skills to eradicate harmful stereotypes and foster tolerance.
- Recent and new manifestations of racism and discrimination call for renewed commitments to mobilise for equality. Racism will not be overcome with mere professions of good faith but must be combatted with anti-racist action.

The use of new technologies and artificial intelligence in security raise the spectre of 'techno-racism', as facial recognition programmes can misidentify and target racialized communities.

- A **global culture of tolerance, equality and anti-discrimination** should be built first and foremost in the minds of women and men.

Source: TH