



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

9 June 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Following the virtual town hall meeting held on Thursday, 4 June 2020, in New York, I wish to share with you a rough transcript of what I said to the colleagues in New York. We gathered amidst the COVID-19 pandemic to focus on another urgent challenge – the plague of racism, prompted by a murderous act of police brutality that has led to widespread protests in the United States and, now, cities around the world.

The position of the United Nations on racism is crystal clear: this scourge violates the United Charter and debases our core values. Every day, in our work across the world, we strive to do our part to promote inclusion, justice, dignity and combat racism in all its manifestations.

I also want to be clear about the recent guidance issued by the Ethics Panel and relevant Departments. It does not in any way indicate that staff are to remain neutral or impartial in the face of racism. To the contrary, there is no ban on personal expressions of solidarity or acts of peaceful civic engagement, provided they are carried out in an entirely private capacity; rather, the guidance was meant to emphasize the need to balance such activities with one's best judgement as international civil servants and our official duties.

The United Nations has a proud record of fighting racism and all forms of discrimination, from our leading role in the struggle against apartheid to the welcome extended to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indeed, our own illustrious former colleague – Ralph Bunche – was the first person of colour to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and a front-line figure in the civil rights struggle.

You will see in the attached transcript that I am calling for a deep and sincere discussion among colleagues about racism, including at the United Nations. I look forward to continuing our dialogue and, together, strengthening our Organization to face the critical challenges of our age.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', written over a long horizontal line that tapers to a point on the right.

António Guterres

All United Nations Staff Members