

Joint Rome-based Agencies Statement on Racism

Fourth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP

Executive Board

Rome, 12 October 2020

The Fourth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board takes place at a time when humanity is fighting not only a global COVID-19 pandemic, but also a threat to food security that is just as dangerous – a hunger pandemic. Our efforts to combat these dual problems are being strained by multiple interlocking threats and challenges.

One of the most serious is - what the United Nations Secretary-General has described as “the plague of racism”. In countries both rich and poor, it creates inequality in living and working conditions, in addition to unequal access to food and our fragile food systems.

The position of the United Nations on racism is crystal clear: it is a scourge that violates the United Nations Charter and debases our core values.

The Secretary-General has also turned the spotlight on the United Nations family itself, saying: “If racism is something that exists everywhere, racism also exists within the United Nations. We have very robust policies in relation to discrimination, harassment, abuse of authority. But we have not paid enough attention within the Organization to the specific question of racist bias and racist discrimination.” The Secretary-General went on to call for “a deep and sincere discussion among colleagues about racism”.

This statement is a joint step in the Rome-based Agencies’ response to the Secretary-General’s call and a symbol of our determination to act on his words.

In line with our mandates and our shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, we recognize that racism and discrimination have no place in a just and equitable world. Racism and discrimination have no place in our organizations.

We, the Rome-based Agencies, are united by common purposes. We work to end hunger and malnutrition and to achieve food security for all. We promote sustainable agriculture, transformative rural development and strong, fair food systems, because these are the building blocks of a more equitable and more stable world. We share a particular focus on improving the lives and livelihoods of smallholder farmers – both women and men. We are committed to helping the poorest among us and leaving no one behind, and we will never commit or perpetuate injustices based on race.

The Rome-based Agencies are also united in our diversity: our workforces are drawn from countries from every continent of the globe. Inclusiveness and respect for our differences are at the heart of our organizations, of who we are and what we do.

In light of the recent events that have shaken communities worldwide, today, we, the Rome-based Agencies, underline our joint commitment to stand firm against racism, intolerance, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination. We believe that solidarity and shared conviction can transform this moment into an opportunity for real change. We humbly acknowledge that we can and must do better. We must work together to tackle the root causes of racism and discrimination by raising awareness, increasing our own knowledge and that of our partners and beneficiaries, and by demonstrating tolerance and inclusiveness in our daily work both in the big and small things we do .

We pledge to work together to root out racism and discrimination within our own organizations and beyond – as we continue our work on behalf of the vulnerable and marginalized communities and individuals whom we serve.

FAO

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