

**Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Professor Muhammadou M.O. Kah
Permanent Representative of The Gambia to the UNOG and Chair of The
African Group of Ambassadors, Geneva Switzerland
Wednesday 14th July 2021**

Distinguished Panellists,

Excellencies,

Participants.

On behalf of The African Group of Ambassadors in Geneva and the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, together with its partners the Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Geneva, Switzerland, it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you today to the Second Annual Nelson Mandela Human Rights Lecture.

We are delighted to have you with us to participate and share in this Side Event on the fringes of the 47th Human Rights Council Session. I thank you all for making time to participate.

**Distinguished Panellists, Excellencies and
Participants**

In these disruptive days of the Covid 19 Pandemic many of you have had to adjust to a barrage of online activities, albeit sometimes at unsociable hours. This serves as a reminder just how important our work on improving Human Rights is and the need for us all to be active and vigilant in the promotion of Human Rights for all, leaving no one behind.

Our theme of this year's lecture is the ***20th Anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA): reflection on the achievements and continuing challenges.***

As we are all aware, The DDPA is the outcome document of the World Conference against Racism, Racial

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Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) held in Durban South Africa in 2001.

Established as the standard of Non-discrimination in International Law, The DPPA has served "as the foremost mechanism" to galvanise the international community to speak with one voice in emphasising that Racism and Racial Intolerance is unacceptable.

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Thanks to the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights the Human Rights Council has evolved as a key jigsaw piece in the vast repertoire of the United Nations System for peaceful global co-existence.

We must not under-estimate the work and value that the DDPA has brought in shaping today's discourse on Racism and Racial Intolerance in many spheres.

The world must know, and we must continue to be relentless in our collective efforts ensuring we uproot Racism and all its forms from everywhere and that, All Africans everywhere deserve 'human and social dignity'. I must say continuing Ignorance is central to the perpetuation of "Racism". No one is born a Racist! We must be relentless in our efforts to educate and enlighten always! Without which, values will continue to be eroded, and chaos increasingly looms in our societies and those that perpetuate Racism will continue to cause societal instability and our collective insecurity. We urgently need to return and respect our shared humanity, our Unique and rich African cultural values and heritage that has always respected and protected

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Human rights of individuals and communities and love for humanity!

As I reflect on this year's lecture for the 20th Anniversary of the Durban Declaration and program of Action (DDPA): reflection on the achievements and continuing challenges, the importance and centrality of responsible leadership in all strata in our countries and our individual and collective resolve to go beyond the usual rhetoric and confrontations are required in abundance measure to implement actions for an impactful and result oriented DDPA.

Excellencies, Distinguished Panelists and Participants, my reflections and thoughts are best encapsulated in a statement by our great and rare gem and Africa's iconic statesman- President Nelson Mandela who this second Annual theme is named after. I quote...

"Our single most important challenge is therefore to help establish a social order in which the freedom of the individual will truly mean the freedom of the individual. We must construct that people-centred society of freedom in such a manner that it guarantees the political liberties and the human rights of all our citizens." *Nelson Mandela, speech at the opening of the South African parliament, Cape Town 25 May 1994.*

It is against this backdrop that the panel of eminent, knowledgeable, and distinguished personalities before us have been identified to present to us today. They will remind us how it all started, how far we have come, but more importantly, help us chart the way forward, in our quest for a fairer and equitable world, free from racism and racial intolerance.

It is my honour on behalf of the African Group of Ambassadors and Co-Sponsors to invite you to the start of this event.

Thank you for your kind attention.