

118th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Closing remarks by the Delegation of Finland
18 August 2026

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the delegation of Finland, I would like to sincerely thank the Committee for the open, constructive and genuinely engaging dialogue we have had during these two days.

For us, this review is not simply an exercise in reporting on what Finland has done. It is equally an opportunity to listen, to reflect critically on our own policies and practices, and to identify where further efforts are needed. We have received valuable questions, observations and recommendations, and we will take these lessons back home with us.

Finland is currently implementing its second consecutive National Action Plan against Racism. Through this work, we have learned important lessons about what is needed to move from individual measures towards more systematic and sustainable action.

At the same time, we are seeing an important shift in government policy on non-discrimination. For the first time, dedicated funding has been allocated in the State budget for measures to promote equality and combat racism – EUR 6 million, to be precise.

This is significant because, until now, Finland's national non-discrimination policies have relied to a considerable extent on two foundations: European Union legislation and its implementation at the national level, and EU-funded projects supporting that implementation.

Project-based work has brought many benefits. It has required ambition, innovation, partnerships and accountability. Projects have enabled us to develop new practices, bring together different actors and raise awareness of equality and non-discrimination among public authorities, stakeholders and the general public. The active public debate that we have today in Finland on equality, racism and discrimination is also, at least in part, a result of this long-term work.

But project-based work has its limitations. Projects have a beginning and an end, and they are usually limited in scope. Lasting change requires continuity, permanent structures and adequate resources.

We therefore see effective implementation of existing legislation as particularly important. The Non-Discrimination Act places clear equality duties on public authorities, education providers, employers and others. Our task as a Government is not only to maintain a strong legislative framework but also to support those actors in fulfilling their obligations in practice.

This is ultimately where the impact of our work should be seen: in teachers who are better equipped to recognise and address discrimination, in healthcare professionals who are more aware of the diverse circumstances of their patients, in employers who actively promote equality, and in public services that are accessible and equal for everyone.

These may sound like small, everyday examples. But this is precisely where human rights become real. The success of our policies is ultimately measured by whether they make a difference in people's everyday lives.

We must also recognise that governments cannot bring about this change alone. Combating racism and racial discrimination requires the participation of society as a whole – public authorities, civil society, communities, employers, educational institutions and individuals.

And we are doing this work in an increasingly difficult international environment. The global backlash against human rights is making our task more challenging. It also reminds us why strong international human rights institutions, independent monitoring mechanisms and dialogue between States and treaty bodies remain so important.

In this respect, the work of this Committee is invaluable. A dialogue such as the one we have had during these two days allows us to look at familiar challenges from a different perspective. It can point to issues that deserve greater attention and help us identify where our policies need to become more effective.

We have listened carefully – also when the questions have been difficult. We will take your observations and recommendations back to Helsinki and consider them seriously as we continue our work to combat racism and racial discrimination and to promote equality in Finland.

Let me therefore conclude by thanking the Committee for its expertise, its openness and the genuine dialogue we have had. We leave Geneva with valuable guidance and with new elements for the work ahead.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson, and thank you to all Members of the Committee.

= = =