



## Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination

### Declaration to mark the International day for the elimination of racial discrimination, 21 March 2012

Adopted by the Committee in Paris on 20 March 2012

#### Politicians to lead by example in the fight against racial discrimination

The Committee on equality and Non-discrimination strongly condemns the abhorrent and barbaric acts of terrorism in the south of France, probably motivated by antisemitism, racism and islamophobia, in which 7 persons have died, including 3 children.

The Committee wishes to mark the celebration of the International day for the elimination of racial discrimination in 2012, by calling on politicians to condemn racial discrimination and bring the fight against it to the heart of their public engagement.

Racism is a main cause for inequality in Europe, leading to social exclusion, discrimination in all areas of life and, in the most serious cases, violent attacks. Some groups and communities are particularly targeted, such as Roma and other visible minorities.

Unfortunately, all too often, persistent racist and xenophobic discourse from public figures stirs up prejudice, stigmatisation and hatred against visible minorities and migrants, creating a vicious circle in which populism and racism reinforce each other.

Recalling the relevance of the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, the Committee reiterates that freedom of expression cannot be used as a pretext to justify hate speech and that *'political freedoms cannot be allowed to be abused to exploit, cause or initiate prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality or for the purpose of seeking to gain the sympathy of the electorate for prejudice on such grounds'*.

The Committee condemns all forms of racist discourse and racial discrimination and calls on the responsibility of politicians and political parties to lead by example in preventing and combating these plights.