

PRESS RELEASE

HEADLINE: United Nations Development Programme in Guyana partners with the Ethnic Relations Commission to address hate speech in Guyana, support institutional strengthening and build public resilience against it.

Sub-header: *Georgetown, Guyana – October 8, 2024* – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) of Guyana today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which aims at enhancing the knowledge base surrounding hate speech and fostering institutional resilience in the face of this growing challenge. This partnership comes when Guyana prepares for the 2025 General Elections, a period that historically witnesses a surge in ethnic and racial hate speech.

In an age of unprecedented information access, a click, a swipe, or a scroll can open a constant stream of news, articles and social media posts competing for our attention. However, within this ocean of data lies a hidden danger: hate speech from information pollution. Understood as the spread of false, misleading, manipulated and otherwise harmful messages, information pollution can quietly shape opinions, instigate conflict, and erode trust in reliable information.

As experienced during the pandemic and now with the multiple crises worldwide, information pollution is threatening our ability to make informed decisions, participate in democratic processes, and contribute to the building of inclusive, peaceful and just societies. In fact, the United Nations Secretary-General has identified this phenomenon as a major contemporary threat, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to combat it.

In this scenario, UNDP, as the largest United Nations provider of electoral assistance and with extensive experience in the field of democratic strengthening, is developing a series of innovative tools to support national, regional, and global efforts to promote information integrity and the resilience of information systems. Similarly, the ERC, being a constitutional entity mandated to promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination, has long recognized the impact of hate speech on societal divisions and is committed to proactive measures to counteract it. As part of the MoU, UNDP will provide comprehensive support to the ERC, including:

1. **Technical assistance** to strengthen ERC's existing methodologies for mapping and countering disinformation and hate speech.
2. **Strengthen ERC's capacities** to access social media data, providing crucial insights into information pollution.
3. **Enhancing the ERC's technological infrastructure** to better respond to these challenges.

Central to this initiative is the '**Digital Kit for Democracy**,' which includes the powerful [eMonitor+](#) system—a state-of-the-art social media monitoring and analysis tool that leverages artificial intelligence to track and analyse harmful content across various platforms. eMonitor+

facilitates the extraction and analysis of thousands of pieces of information from platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and others. This information increases knowledge of pernicious phenomena in the information ecosystems of countries and regions.

Furthermore, as it is deployed simultaneously in various countries with different information dynamics, eMonitor+ is helping establish a standardized language and comparative data collection, analysis, and dissemination methodologies, so that cross-border dialogue, learning and cooperation can be facilitated. This makes eMonitor+ particularly useful in contexts with little research or data available on these topics. Only in 2024, six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have started implementing eMonitor+ (Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Venezuela), and have since accessed a portfolio of good practices, innovative approaches, and partnership possibilities to tackle electoral mis/disinformation and hate speech.

The UNDP Resident Representative for Guyana and Surinam, Mr. Gerardo Noto said, "By equipping the ERC with the tools and methodologies to combat hate speech and misinformation, we are taking proactive measures to strengthen democracy and promote social cohesion."

The Chairman of the ERC, Shaikh Moeenul Hack, noted that "the ERC launched a proactive Countering Hate Speech campaign aimed at reducing racial and ethnic violations in the lead-up to the elections. The E-Monitoring Tool will be instrumental in enhancing our capacity to capture a wider reach of content. This innovative, automated system will efficiently identify key words and phrases that are racially and ethnically offensive, allowing us to respond more swiftly and effectively."

Through this collaboration, the ERC will enhance its Media Monitoring Unit's capacity to identify and address racially- and ethnically-motivated hate speech, disinformation, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. The implementation of eMonitor+ will provide ERC with the necessary tools to extract and analyse large volumes of data, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges posed by information pollution.

The signing of the MOU forms part of the wider ERC-UN System campaign to 'Counter Hate Speech', which was launched in June 2024. This campaign is an element of UN Guyana's national implementation of the global United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which highlights the UN's ongoing commitment to promote peaceful, inclusive and just societies

As this initiative unfolds, both UNDP and ERC look forward to setting a benchmark for collaboration against information pollution in the region, ultimately working toward a more equitable and democratic future for all Guyanese citizens.

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The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) is a Constitutional body established by Article 212 of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, to promote harmony and good relations among all the peoples of Guyana.