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**Panel 3 The critical link between the right to development, the Sustainable Development Goals and racism**

**22 October 2019, 10.00**

**Panelist 4: MICHAŁ BALCERZAK, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**

Mr/Ms Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

**[Introductory remarks about the mandate and activities of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent]**

Development as one of the leading themes of the UN Decade on People of African Descent has been frequently discussed in the activities of the Working Group. One of our public sessions was specifically focused on the right to development and areas which deserve special attention in this respect, such as education, employment, protection of health and housing. It has been common understanding that the enjoyment of these rights by People of African Descent is far from being satisfactory.

The purpose of the present panel is to look at the links between racism and the DDPA, the SDGs and the right to development. All these areas are closely related with the Working Group’s mandate. But apart from just reaffirming the significance of the right to development and the SDGs, it is also worth to elaborate on practical steps which were taken by the Working Group itself in order to promote and support programmes and projects intended for People of African Descent in various areas related with development.

To this end it should be reminded that the mandate of the Working Group includes a potentially very useful tool for promoting development, but also other goals of the Decade. I am referring to the competence provided explicitly in the Group’s mandate, and notably „contributing to the development programmes intended for People of African Descent” undertaken by international financial and development institutions, operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Let us have a closer look at this part of the Group’s mandate and reflect on the possible ways that it can serve for the benefit of People of African Descent.

First, the idea of the WG’s „linking” and co-operating with „international and development institutions and the specialized agencies of the United Nations” goes back to the original mandate of the Group, i.e. the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/68. Interestingly, the resolution establishing the Working Group actually entrusted it with the task of „developing programmes intended for People of African Descent” in close collaboration with international and development institutions. The subsequent resolutions of the Human Rights Council which extended the Group’s mandate slightly reformulated this task and the current mandate requires that the WG engages into:

**„Liaising with financial and development institutional and operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations, with a view to contribute to the development programmes intended for people of African descent”**

The mandate specifies further that the Group’s contribution should result in

**„allocating additional investments to health systems, education, housing, electricity, drinking water and environmental control measures and promoting equal opportunities in employment, as well as other affirmative or positive measures and strategies within the human rights framework”.**

It should be reminded also that in the Programme of activities for the implementation of the Decade, the states but also the international financial and development institutions have been urged **to give high priority to programmes and projects specifically tailored for combating racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent.** Although the WG has not been explicitly entrusted with the task of assessing or supervising the performance of the entities referred to above, I believe that it is within our mandate to bring the attention of the financial and development institutions to the aims and priorities of the Decade.

In other words, **there are at least two principal tasks of the WG in the context of its liaising with international financial and development institutions**, and notably:

1. To contribute to the development programmes intended for people of African descent, as provided in paragraph 8 of our mandate,
2. to raise the aims and priorities of the Decade in contacts with these institutions, and insist that they prioritize programs and projects specifically tailored for people of African descent.

The above tasks are considered part and parcel of the Group’s mandate and completely fit within the field of its competence. For many previous years the Working Group’s activities were focused on elaborating proposals and recommendations addressed to states on how to effectively combat racial discrimination against People of African descent and improve their human rights situation. We continue to do so through our studies, monitoring and country visits. However, the Group has also engaged into active dialogue with international development and financial institutions to work out its role as a competent body to contribute to programmes intended for people of African descent.

On a practical level, the actions undertaken by the Group in order to fulfil its tasks referred to above should include:

1. studying the agendas of the international financial and development institutions with view of identifying relevant programmes and issues;
2. considering ways to be actively involved in the consultation process of development programmes intended for People of African descent, both at the planning stage, as well as in the course of their implementation,
3. encouraging relevant development and financial institutions to take more interest in the WG’s activities, including to participate in its public sessions,
4. regularly reporting on its contribution to the development programmes,
5. last but not least – considering ways to involve other relevant actors in the process of consulting and contributing to the development programmes.

The list of international financial and development institutions which should be taken into account in pursuing the above aims is substantial. Without attempting to draft an exhaustive list, it appeared reasonable to start from having a closer look at the activities of the World Bank Group as well as regional development banks, such as the Inter-American Development Bank. Some of these institutions have already a long record when it comes to promoting development in Afro-descendant communities. Needless to say, in evaluating and contributing to such programmes the Group should adopt a critical approach and verify the outcomes. In particular, we should be very mindful of how the programmes influence the interests and human rights of People of African Descent.

**One of the major developments – or perhaps achievements – when it comes to our Working Group’s methods in monitoring the progress in the area of the SDGs are Operational Guidelines, which were finalized only very recently**. Over the last two years we were discussing how to effectively promote the SDGs within our field of competence and existing mandate. We decided to use the SDGs as a basis for drafting a tailored collection of guidelines that would serve as a source of reference for states and other relevant actors. We intended to look at the SDGs through the “lens” of our mandate and provide a document which would help us to identify gaps and measure progress with respect to the right to development, so that no person of African descent is left behind – to use the rhetoric of the SDGs.

To conclude, the Working Group is determined to go beyond theoretical considerations when it comes to promoting development and contribute to programmes specifically tailored for People of African descent. However, the results of these efforts depend to the large extent on how much knowledge we have on such programs. We hope that states and the civil society will be willing to share with us their experience in this regard. We know that not every programme tailored for People of African Descent has been considered successful by those directly involved or interested. Therefore we encourage states to share their experience in this respect. By the same token, we invite the other human rights mechanisms and the civil society to bring to our attention any concerns or difficulties that they may have encountered when programmes intended for People of African descent are being implemented. I believe that with your assistance the Working Group will succeed in its tasks.

Thank you for your attention.