

**ALPHAZULU ADVOCATES' SUBMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL DEBT ARCHITECTURE REFORM AND HUMAN RIGHTS, TO THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON THE EFFECTS OF FOREIGN DEBT AND OTHER RELATED INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF STATES ON THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, PARTICULARLY ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

1. AlphaZULU Advocates strongly welcomes the Independent Expert's questionnaire, addressed to Member States and other stakeholders, to assist her to elaborate a comprehensive report on international debt architecture reform and human rights through her report which will be presented to the General Assembly during its 76<sup>th</sup> session in October 2021.
2. AlphaZULU Advocates is a civil society advocacy organisation contributing to global development and the advancement of human and democratic rights in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through the provision of core advocacy and capacity building solutions including the creation of spaces for inclusive engagement and participation of public stakeholders, geared towards enhancing effective and coherent policies responses for the implementation of the SDGs.
3. AlphaZULU Advocates, as part of other stakeholders, sets herein independent contributions of participants listed in Para 10 below (which may not represent their organisations' views), captured at its virtual African Peoples' Forum in May 2021, themed "Peaceful, Inclusive and Conducive Approaches to Africa's Sustainable Development", bringing examples from 12 different African countries with 2 Panels addressing 2 discussions: Creating strong inclusive and data-driven people-centred institutions strengthened by people-driven accountability mechanisms to improve effective policy responses and efficient domestic resource allocation as well as to reduce systemic corruption, aid dependency and debt crisis in Africa; and Mobilising meaningful locally-invested regional and foreign investment and cooperation for Africa's sustainable development, that protects and promotes the African brand, people, culture and environment as well as creating sustainable value chains.

**B. SUBMISSIONS**

5. AlphaZULU Advocates gathered that Government in many African countries resorted to foreign debts to protect the fiscal space required to respond to the exceptional needs of the population during the COVID-19 pandemic, in areas such as health, food, education and social security. However, the domestic mechanisms to ensure that loans were effectively internalised and available resources used to safeguard human rights of the people were not effectively coordinated. Citing the Nigerian example, COVID-19 palliatives were distributed by Federal Government across all 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory but there was no further monitoring to ensure that palliatives were distributed to the people who were economically affected by lockdown restrictions in a country where many people trade daily to support their families and where there is poor social security policy. Lack of effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms encouraged gross corruption from the Executive and Legislature at sub-national levels with most of the palliatives hoarded and many warehouses later discovered by hungry and angry citizens, giving rise to nation-wide civil protests and free for all public looting in which some citizens lost their lives in October 2020. The judicial mechanisms for redressing human rights violation were weak, eroding the significance of consequences for wrongdoing of public office holders.

8. AlphaZULU Advocates gathered that the aspects of national and international debt architecture that need to be reformed to make it robust is regarding stakeholder engagement and consultation. While it is appreciated that issues such as foreign debt and development cooperation are agreed at intergovernmental levels, both bilateral or multilateral; however, the consequences of debt defaults very often trickle down and directly affect citizens. Hence the debt architecture should be designed to include citizens as important stakeholders and part of the debt ecosystem with Lenders emphasising the importance of Borrowing Governments consultation with their citizens. Citing the example from Sierra Leone, in a recent case of \$55m deal between China and Sierra Leone in which Sierra Leone will offer 250 acres of land to China for industrial fishing harbour, the people of Sierra Leone disputed with Government stating the catastrophic human and ecological disaster, threat to natural habitats of endangered species such as pangolins and pollution of the waters for sardines and barracudas.
9. AlphaZULU Advocates gathered that stakeholders at national level, especially at local and/or community grassroots level should be prioritised to identify gaps in the international debt architecture since human rights safeguarding and representative democracy begins and is most relevant at this level. Citizen-centred mechanisms are encouraged and people-first approaches, not the will of a few political elites in socio-economic planning, implementation and management. Government must engage with representatives of the people in parliament and representatives in parliament must also engage with the people they represent, both directly and through their community leaders in transparent and accountable ways. Also, stakeholder engagement must be extensive and continuous, cutting across decision making, implementation and monitoring processes, not tokenism to fulfil lenders' demands. Citing the example from Eswatini, the lack of connection between the community and their member in parliament is structurally a dysfunctional methodology of running the country from a people-driven needs or person-centred approach. Rights-owners (the people) should be able to effectively hold to account duty bearers (the Government and Foreign Donors) and, processes must be data-driven and documented with the country having ownership of its data and the people have access to data, "Eswatini's data belongs to Eswatini".
10. AlphaZULU Advocates gathered from the Benin example that the Government of Benin Republic has improved on existing mechanisms and safeguards to ensure that domestic process for consultation and approval decision take into account consistency with human rights obligations. Reforms that were implemented regarding the effective governance of Benin have included the creation of a dedicated corruption court to address public resources theft and corruption, the electoral system reform and alignment to address systemic ineffectiveness of weak regulation and tax payer resources waste for the benefit of a more inclusive and representative political environment, as well as the digitalisation of administrative procedures ranging from land ownership to driving licence examinations giving way to transparent and effective public services, all measures which have drastically eliminated government expenditure to be rerouted into the retraining of public school teaching staff, infrastructure development to improve access to rural areas farming production or health facilities when paired with the boost in tax income and smarter foreign investment strategies. Benin has succeeded in moving from least develop countries category to position itself amongst lower middle income countries for the time being given that the country has been Africa's 1<sup>st</sup> cotton producer for 3 consecutive years with a steady growth in other areas that paired with the continuous reforms of the ecosystem predict a sustained progression both economically and socially with measures such as free healthcare access for the most vulnerable.

## 11. Contributors include:

Chair: HE Mr Jarvis Matiya, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, UK

Co-Chair: Professor Tony Ghaye, Director, The U MATTER Human Rights and Wellbeing Project, UK

Guest Speaker - HRH Princess Moyinoluwa Falowo, Regent of Ibulesoro Kingdom, Nigeria

Co-Convener: Mr Kwabena Ofosuhene, Abibiman Foundation, UK

Co-Convener: Mr Kobla Asamani, Global Peace Headquarters, South Africa

### Speakers:

Dr Ilma Bogdan, Conservative Friends of the Middle East and North Africa, UK (Algeria)

Mr Franck Dossa, CONNEXUS (Benin)

Mr Emmanuel Niyoyabikoze, Greening Burundi (Burundi)

Mr Edouard Yao, Lead Cote d'Ivoire (Cote d'Ivoire)

Mr Boubou Sangho, Lait Boubou (Mali)

Mr Robo Igbu, Climate Finance Consultant (Nigeria)

Mr Clement Dlamini, Centre for Community Service and Social Work (Eswatini)

Ms Wahba Malloum, FAO (Mauritania)

Mr Adamou Boubacar, Sahel Agropole (Niger)

Dr Kingsley Udofa, Sheffield Hallam University, UK (Nigeria)

Mr Unisa Dizo-Conteh, Kings College Hospital Trust, UK (Sierra-Leone)

Ms Mariam Marechal, World Federation of United Nations Association, South Korea (Cote d'Ivoire)

Convener: Ms Elizabeth Moses-Mullard, AlphaZULU Advocates, UK