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UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

STATEMENT

to the

14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: “Advancing crime prevention, criminal justice and the rule of law: towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda”.

Agenda item 5: Multidimensional approaches by Governments to promoting the rule of law by, inter alia, providing access to justice for all; building effective, accountable, impartial and inclusive institutions; and considering social, educational and other relevant measures, including fostering a culture of lawfulness while respecting cultural identities, in line with the Doha Declaration.

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Thank you Chair,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I am taking the floor on behalf of the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The United Nations Network was created by decision of the Secretary-General in March 2012, with the main goal of providing a platform to address issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including issues of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, age and other grounds. The Network is co-chaired by OHCHR and UNESCO and brings together more than 20 UN Departments, Agencies, Programmes and Funds.

The year 2020 saw troubling developments, from the events leading to the global Black Lives Matter engagements, to very serious impacts of COVID-19 seen in minority communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has added a layer of challenges and vulnerabilities, with potential and actual human rights violations, risks for corruption and limitations for users to access justice on an equal basis. It has highlighted deep structural discriminations that exist in all areas of work of the United Nations, including in law enforcement and criminal justice systems.

At the previous UN Crime Congress member states had already committed *to intensify their national and international efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, religious intolerance, xenophobia and gender-related discrimination by, inter alia, raising awareness, developing educational materials and programmes, and considering, where appropriate, drafting and enforcing legislation against discrimination*. In May 2019, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice conducted a thematic discussion on the responsibility of effective, fair, humane and accountable criminal justice systems in preventing and countering crimes motivated by intolerance or discrimination of any kind.

The developments of 2020, have also created opportunities for advancing protection and participation of minorities and for combatting racism and related intolerance in all aspects of the UN mandate. In this regard, on 7 December 2020, the Network finalized its 2021+ Work Plan, which includes, under 8 mutually supportive workstreams, *inter alia*:

1. Providing practical guidance to UN Country Teams and other field-based entities on measures to combat racial discrimination and strengthen protection of minorities, including gender dimensions and other intersectional aspects, in particular by documenting and highlighting practical examples, and with a view *inter alia* to complementing the forthcoming UN Sustainable Development Goals Operational Guide on Leaving No One Behind.
2. Advancing attention to and action on combatting racial discrimination and strengthening protection of minorities, including in displacement, security, peacekeeping and the protection of civilians in conflict-affected settings, and in the context of climate change.
3. Deepening substantive understanding and engagement of law, policy, norms, facts and good practices in the areas of expertise of the UN Network as a whole, and its participating agencies and entities in particular. In 2021, this shall include attention to tackling racial discrimination and strengthening protection of minorities in areas including criminal justice and law enforcement, taking note in particular of the views and concerns expressed during the Human Rights Council’s June 2020 urgent debate and Resolution 43/1 on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers, and the forthcoming report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to this resolution as well as advancing more broadly the minority protection agenda as per the Secretary General’s February 2020 Call to Action on human rights.

In the area of crime prevention and criminal justice, UNODC has taken the lead of the implementation of the network workplan together with its sister agencies OHCHR, UNICEF and UNESCO. The network has planned a number of activities in this regard and is at the disposal of interested stakeholders, including governments, civil society and academia, to strengthen partnerships and maximize opportunities to explore synergies and complementarities of action. We stand ready to support Member States, in line with their obligations under international law, in building effective, accountable, impartial and inclusive institutions with the view to promoting the rule of law and access to justice for all, including victims of racial discrimination who often belong to minority groups.

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The United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (“the Network”)



(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/UNNetworkRacialDiscriminationProtectionMinorities.aspx>) was created by decision of the Secretary-General at the 6 March 2012 meeting of the Policy Committee, with the main goal of providing a platform to address issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including issues of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, age and other grounds. It enhances dialogue and cooperation between UN Departments, Agencies, Programmes and Funds to address these issues. The Network brings together more than 20 UN Departments, Agencies, Programmes and Funds.