

6th Session of the Group Independent Eminent Experts on the Implementation of the Durban
Declaration and Program of Action

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Distinguished Members of the Group of Eminent Experts

Excellencies of the United Nations,

Distinguished Guests

Fellow Panelists

Friends:

It is a great honor to be among you today. I want to also use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Chair of the Eminent Group for today's invitation. I have been asked to speak to you today on the DDPA's relationship with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an important vehicle to advance the protection of human rights and end the current disparities that have plagued the global community. The goals of the SDGs aim to "leave no one behind" and to reach "those furthest behind first" and it reaffirms the responsibilities of all States to respect, protect and promote the human rights of all.

In my presentation today, I will highlight two critical areas of the DDPA that are important if we are going to achieve sustainable development. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, was an important step in the fight to combat these manifestations of racism and discrimination. The staging of the Conference was an acknowledgement that racism and other related forms of intolerance was a global problem that requires global solutions. The Declaration which emerged from this Conference outlined the source and contemporary consequences of racism, the victims

of racism, and more importantly, strategies, by way of a program of actions, to achieve racial and economic equality.

The DDDPA reasserts the principles of equality and non-discrimination as core human rights, and assigns primary responsibility for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to States, as duty bearers, while also calling for the active involvement of international and non-governmental organizations, political parties, national human rights institutions, the private sector, the media and civil society.

Paragraphs 13 and 14 are significant. Paragraph 13 states that “slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity, not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims.” Furthermore, it stated that “slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade.” Furthermore, it states that “these crimes are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and **continue to be victims of their consequences (mentioned also in para 14).**”

In paragraph 18, which is one of the least cited but most insightful paragraph, it states “we emphasize that poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities are closely associated with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty”

The DDDPA has shown that there is a clear connection between poverty and racism. The history of slavery has left behind a phenomenal legacy. The legacy is seen on a daily basis. In all of these societies, the black community are economically marginalized and disenfranchised. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that countries that stated that have had a history of the trade in enslaved Africans also have as their poorest population group people that are disproportionately composed of racial or ethnic minorities. Faced with structural discrimination and structural invisibility, population groups such as people of African descent, face an uphill task in their attempts to attain

their human rights thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty across generations. People of African descent are amongst the poorest and most marginalized communities around the world. As a Working Group monitoring the human rights situation of people of African descent and undertaking fact-finding missions to different countries it is of great concern to see that indicators in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, infant mortality and life expectancy still show a situation of disadvantage and vast disparities with the rest of the population.

The problems and vulnerabilities that post-colonial societies are facing do not stem from poor stewardship, despite what some people want you to believe. The relatively poor rankings, the uneven development, persistent poverty, and the income and wealth inequality are the legacies of centuries of exploitation. The seeds of Caribbean underdevelopment, and underdevelopment in Latin America, and Africa were sown long before those regions gained their independence.

The framers of the DDPA were visionaries. They saw the connection between historical injustices and poverty and underdevelopment and implored upon us the need and importance of reframing the discourse on development. Development should encompass some historical perspective. Furthermore, development should be wholistic. Paragraph 158 and 159 outline this wholistic approach. It mentions the need to develop programs for the social and economic development of the diaspora. I have read with interest, the arguments put forward by the various agencies and development experts about current state of underdevelopment and multi-dimensional poverty that exist in these societies. It is worth bringing to your attention that the arguments they put forward reject any historical perspective. There is no acknowledgement in development discourse of how colonialism underdeveloped the Caribbean. There is no acknowledgement that the lack of social and economic growth that confront these societies, and which are so visible in the Human Development Index, are structurally linked to the colonial past. Exploitation of the region's resources (both human and natural) have damaged the Caribbean's development prospects.

This is what sets the DDPA apart from the SDGs. The DDPA recognize that poverty is both a cause and consequence of discrimination. I have been looking, and I am open to correction, but nowhere in the 2030 Agenda are race-based differences in development – and in expectations of development - acknowledged.

Therefore, the DDPA clearly show that the elimination of racial discrimination is central to the eradication of poverty. There are many important recommendations aimed at eliminating racial

discrimination but the two I will focus on today are 1) the call to States “to establish and implement without delay adopt and develop comprehensive national action plans to tackle racism through the reinforcement of national institutions, legislation, the administration of justice, and through the creation of competent national bodies to adequately investigate allegations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or related intolerance. An increasing number of States have established equality bodies supported by appropriate legislation and policies to combat racial discrimination, but the implementation of the law also requires vigilance and activism from civil society. The implementation of commitments made at Durban to improve the lives of people of African descent are not universal. Nearly 18 years after the adoption of the DDPA only 14 EU Member States had in place dedicated action plans against racism, racial/ethnic discrimination and related intolerance. 2) paragraph 92 of the DDPA urges states to collect, compile, analyze, disseminate and publish reliable statistical data on people of African descent in order to institute programs aimed at eliminating racial discrimination.

The pervasiveness of negative racism, structural discrimination, Afrophobia and related intolerances pose a serious challenge to the attainment of the SDGs. The WGEPAD would caution and remind Member States that the eradication of structural discrimination is a key driver for attaining the SDGs. Achieving the 2030 goals and targets requires dismantling the infrastructure of hate, and the structural and systemic barriers to sustainable development that exist for people of African descent in developing and developed countries.

The interrelatedness of the targets makes the need to eliminate these barriers more pressing. For example, to achieve Goal 1 (poverty) and Goal 10 (inequality within country), governments must commit to eliminate fully, the economic disparities and social exclusion that currently exists within their societies. Structural discrimination can both drive poverty and be a hurdle in alleviating poverty, as is evident in countries where people of African descent continue to live in material deprivation.

Importantly, the 2030 Agenda relies heavily on access to education, one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development, which is why racial disparities in access to education and educational resources (as well as the racial bias embedded in education influencers’ decisions)

is particularly toxic. The global education goal (SDG 4) covers an ambitious range of targets, of which it aims to ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. This, of course, is a mechanism through which economically and socially marginalized peoples can lift themselves out of poverty. It plays a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and fostering tolerance between people. However, if a boy or girl of African descent is blocked from completing their education or, because of racial stereotypes, diverted by teachers to educational paths that reduce their opportunities for post-secondary education, SDG 4 can never be realized. Without an inclusive education, that boy or girl of African descent will not acquire skills to earn a better income and find decent work, as sought in SDG 8. Similarly, on the issue of gender equality (Goal 5), if a young girl of African descent cannot expect one day to inherit land, express her opinion on issues affecting her, or experience the true equality of making choices about her life, we merely give lip service to these goals.

Goal 16, which focuses on just, peaceful and inclusive societies, offers another instructive example. This goal will be unattainable if people of African descent do not have equal access to justice and freedom from all forms of violence, including state violence. The litany of cases of racial profiling by law enforcement globally, and the increasing levels of police violence against people of African descent not only divert policing resources from actual crime, they also create a climate of harassment and injustice that burdens the liberty, freedoms, and fundamental rights of people of African descent. This is a matter of serious concern to the Working Group.

Given its cross-cutting nature, the 2030 goals and targets cannot be met without acknowledging that racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia, xenophobia and related intolerance function as structural and systemic barriers to sustainable development. Furthermore, the reluctance in some countries to disaggregate data based on race and ethnicity in order to identify the most marginalized and most impacted groups in society, calls into question once more, the attainability of the SDGs. The collective vision for the world in 2030, as expressed by the global community in 2015, can only be met by committing to the removal of structural and systemic impediments to the fulfillment of the SDGs, including racial bias against people of African descent – a form of racism constructed and operating still to facilitate white supremacy and exploitation.

operational guidelines, mention WGEPAD's engagement with the HLPF, UN Stats, and other UN agencies in the course of developing the guidelines and advocacy for the including of people of African descent in the 2030 agenda.

We bear an awesome responsibility to ensure that future generations of people of African descent enjoy their right to development and that they may live in a world free of the scourge of racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the interest of peace and justice. The commitments made to combat racism through the DDPA will only be words if member states fail to adopt them. Their value depends wholly on our courage, will and determination to honor them and to give them meaning. As we aim to transform the world in which we live through sustainable and equitable development, let us pledge that “no one should be left behind.”