

**UN WGEPAD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT
MID-TERM REVIEW**

Position paper submitted by the Latin American Council for the Decade for People of African Descent (ALDA in Spanish)*

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) with the themes of Recognition, Justice and Development. The Program of Activities for the Decade establishes a framework of actions that States and multilateral organizations must take to ensure that the human rights of Afro-descendants are fulfilled.

Unfortunately, we note with regret that not only have the objectives set out in the Programme of Activities not been met, but in most cases, States and even the International Community have not initiated its implementation; among these objectives is the establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African descent, which is seen as a strategic space for articulation "... to be used as a consultation mechanism for people of African descent and other interested parties, as a platform to improve the quality of livelihoods and livelihoods of people of African descent and as a contribution to the elaboration of a United Nations declaration..."(A/RES/73/262).

In May 2019, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights convened a Civil Society Consultation "On the Modalities, Format, and Substantive Procedural Aspects of the Permanent Forum on People of African descent" in which among other issues, participants discussed the location of the Permanent Forum within the structure of the UN, the frequency, duration and location of the Permanent Forum sessions and the composition and selection process of Permanent Forum members.

Since the consultation, Afro-descendant organizations and people from around the world have worked together in an effort to form an International Coalition on People of African descent, likewise at the regional level of Latin America, organizations participating in the consultation established the Latin American Council for the Decade on people of African descent (ALDA), to strengthen advocacy initiatives and develop a shared position for the Permanent Forum. We have carried out activities, events and advocacy on the Decade and the Permanent Forum in Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Colombia, Panamá, Perú, the USA and Europe through which we have collectively constructed our position for the Permanent Forum.

Our position for the Permanent Forum is based on our commitment to overcome structural and systemic racism, rooted in racialisation, and to guarantee equality and dignity for the

Afro-descendant peoples and all humans. For this, we must work for recognition of all invisibilised and marginalized people of African descent and Africans.

This is why in the framework of the Decade, the Permanent Forum is an important and urgent process. The Permanent Forum must be a space for dialogue, advice and decision-making with States and the United Nations, guaranteeing the full and effective participation of Afrodescendant peoples. One of the tasks of the Permanent Forum is to ensure that people of African descent are recognized, and included as humans in accordance with the first line of the UN Charter's preamble, "we people of nations..." the founding principle of the UN.

Organizations of Afro-descendant civil society from the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Europe, in accordance with discussions that we have held in our diverse communities, have concluded and reaffirmed that the Permanent Forum must be created as a subsidiary body to ECOSOC. We believe there is a need for an independent and transparent body at the highest level of the United Nations, in order to overcome structural and systemic racism, to guarantee equality and dignity, and to address all issues affecting People of African Descent

The proclamation of the International Decade on People of African descent and the creation of the Permanent Forum are a recognition by the Member States of the International Community that we have not yet overcome structural and systemic racism and of the need to strengthen efforts at the international level to overcome it. We believe that if effective implementation is guaranteed, an ECOSOC Permanent Forum, through dialogue with the States and the bodies of the United Nations, can be the most efficient mechanism to overcome racism and guarantee the recognition, justice and development of people African descent.

We welcome the approval of Resolution A/RES/74/137 of the General Assembly in December 2019 that reiterates the decision to establish the Permanent Forum and expresses the commitment of the Member States to hold "new consultations with people of African descent" in the framework of decision-making on the modalities, format and substantive and procedural aspects of the Permanent Forum (para. 13) which will allow us to continue participating and influencing this fundamental process.

Under this framework, we consider it extremely important that, on this occasion, such a consultation be held in the Americas, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, taking into account that the vast majority of people of African descent are in said region. In this way, the UN will foster greater participation and representation of the Afro-descendant peoples, communities and leaders of Latin America, which historically have been the foremost promoters of the advancements relating to Afro-descendant rights, including the International Decade.

To this end, we also encourage the United Nations to guarantee sufficient financial resources for the participation of Latin American Afro-descendant civil society organizations in these dialogues, both for future consultations on the Permanent Forum as well as for the coming session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, where a mid-term evaluation of the International Decade will be conducted.

Declaration of Rights of People of African descent

We also note that little progress has been made on the declaration on the rights of people of African descent. While we recognise that the Declaration on the rights of PAD will likely be a task of the Permanent Forum on People of African descent we wish to emphasise the importance of such a Declaration for overcoming the structural racism underpinning the violation of the fundamental human rights of people of African descent and our hope that this objective is realised before the end of the Decade.

We are concerned that some states have suggested there may not be a need for such a declaration due to the scope and protections of existing human rights instruments such as the ICERD, declaration on the rights of Minorities and the UNDRIP among others. Specific protection mechanisms, whether declarations or conventions, stem from a recognition that despite the existing instruments for the most fundamental and universal human rights there is still a need for States to pay special attention to, and take specific and special measures for the rights of particular groups, often based on historical patterns of discrimination and marginalisation these groups have faced.

Moreover, the multiple and compound forms of discrimination, marginalization, underdevelopment and lack of social justice suffered by African descendants all over the world, ratifies the need for progressive steps to consolidate these norms into an internationally recognised human rights instrument with legal and political significance, placing the rights of people of African descent within the international human rights regime.

Therefore, we encourage and ratify the need for a Declaration that reaffirms, from an intersectional approach, the rights of People of African descent, and delves in topics such as environmental issues, sustainable development and Afro-descendant cosmovision.

COVID-19, public health and people of African descent

Again, scientific and racist colonialism shows its face to the new pandemic that affects the world. Countries attacked by this unprecedented virus deploy a number of health, political and social batteries that, like the virus, have differential effects for Afro-descendant and African communities.

While we understand the importance of preventive measures such as curfews and mandatory quarantines, these measures, recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), do not respond to the reality of the vast majority of Afro-descendant populations in the world.

The situation of Afro-descendant populations in the Americas and Europe leads to structural and multiplied racism and inequalities in our communities, which shows access to health and hospital networks around our territories and confirms our high-level realities of social vulnerability. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation remains a privilege of other social sectors.

Likewise, the genocide of the African descendant youth, particularly in Latin America is an issue of great concern. Thousands of young african descendants are still losing their lives due to the effects of poverty, exclusion and marginalization in our countries. This phenomenon has multiplied in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is clear that the Decade's Program of Activities has not impacted in terms of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to the Afro-descendant populations around the world. This is understood because of the low levels of health, political, social and economic development of our communities, which will be exacerbated by post-pandemic effects.

That is why we deeply believe there is a need to create different scenarios that analyse COVID-19 and other public health emergencies and pandemics that negatively impact our communities at all levels. For instance the UN should encourage and aid Member States to generate specific health, social and economic policies and actions to reduce the impact of the pandemic in our communities.

The Decade's Mid-term Review should also address the impact of racism, racial discrimination and exclusion of African descendant women, children, youth and people with disabilities, and include strong policy recommendations for the Decade's last quinquennium, as well as recommend that the UN System foster spaces for dialogue, analysis and policy generation in regards to all of these topics.

***The Latin American Council for the Decade on People of African Descent- (ALDA in Spanish)**

In the framework of the Civil Society Consultation in May 2019, we noted with concern the low participation of Latin American Afro-descendant organizations in advocacy space. Based on this concern, we decided to form the Latin American Articulation for the Decade on People of African descent-ALDA in order to organize and coordinate advocacy activities with Latin American Afro-descendant organizations, communities and peoples in the framework of International Decade on people of African descent (2015-2024), and the Inter-American Decade on people of African

descent (2016-2025). This articulation was consolidated in the 49th General Assembly of the OAE, (Medellín, June 2019) in which an articulation and planning meeting of the Coalition regarding Afro-descendant Peoples and Communities of the Americas was held.

ALDA

Agrupación AFRO XANGÔ / Argentina

Asociación de Mujeres Afrocolombianas (AMUAFROC) / Colombia

Asociación Proyecto Caribe / Costa Rica

Colectivo de Entidades Negras / Brasil

Consultoría para Derechos Humanos y Desplazamiento (CODHES) / Colombia

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