Statement by Mutale Nkonde CEO and Founder of AI for the People

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Statement

In line with the comments about algorithmic accountability made my colleague Ms. Catherine S. Namakula, Chair of the Working Group for People of African Descent and Pastor Elías Murillo Martínez, Member Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

The NGO I lead AI for the People would like to contribute to all efforts to ensure the development, deployment and governance of algorithmic systems that power artificial intelligence, blockchain technologies and those developed through quantum computing do not reproduce the same types of anti-Black racism people of African descent face in their everyday lives.

For example, in the United States where AI for the People and operates police use of facial recognition (FR) has led to the wrongful arrest of Robert Williams and Michael Oliver in Detroit and Nijeer Parks in New Jersey, read more here. This is because FR has been found to have problems recognizing Black faces, read more here, reinforcing the racist assumption all Black people look alike.

In the run up to the 2016 Presidential Elections the Russian government targeted Black Americans more than any other group, read more here. Then in the run up the 2020 Presidential Elections Russian operatives attempted to pit continental Africans against Black people in the United States by setting up troll farms in Ghana and, read more here.

In 2018 Amnesty International published a report that found that Black women were 84 percent more likely to be targets of online hate speech than their white counterparts, read the article here This will be much higher now Musk has taken over the platform and welcomes extreme right wing voices to the platform. I wrote about our concerns around this for Slate Magazine, read more here.

In 2018 the global consulting firm McKinney published a report that found AI technologies have the potential to add \$3.5 - \$5.8 trillion per year to the global economy, read the report here. This body must make sure this **is not done** at the expense of people of African descent.

Lastly the in the United States \$122 billion invested by VCs in 2022, read more here. These are the funding mechanism used by men like Musk to start and acquire tech companies, yet Black women only receive 2 percent of these funds.

AI for the People petitioned the US government on these matters through the introduction for the Algorithmic Accountability Act in 2019 and 2022. Within this act we advocated for the use of impact assessments, to enable regulators can see if tech products have a desperate impact on people of African descent. And if they are found to do so prevent them from being released on the US market.

The Permanent Forum for People of African Descent can take this one step further by identifying algorithmic bias ad a human rights concern and place pressure on member states to provide evidence they are using impact assessments to ensure all commercial technical systems are rights respecting.

Therefore, we want to offer our support in drafting a section on technical justice in the UN declaration for People of African descent. We started this work with former UN special rapporteur on racism Tendayi Achiume, read about it [here]. And would like it to continue and support other efforts around human rights and technology currently being discussed by the UN Tech Envoy.