

THE FIGHT AGAINST SYSTEMIC RACISM – FUTURE POLICY MAKING FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent **congratulates** the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent upon its first session, expresses collegial compliments and great expectation of further amplification of the collective strength of people of African descent – also known as the experts of experts.

We **celebrate the significant strides made within the framework of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**, especially the settled standard that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerances must be eliminated worldwide without exception.

The Working Group also recognizes that dialogues, legal frameworks, regrets and concern, must be accompanied by concrete action to lead to the desired end. We therefore align ourselves to the Secretary General's call for concrete action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances, and affirm the view that **progress must be measured by way of clear indicators towards the fortification of a universal racial justice index.**

Our work of twenty years comprises of state visits, and consulting directly with stakeholders including member states, state and government institutions, academia, civil society, people of African descent and victims of violations. It has yielded certain guidelines that may be useful for future strategic policy direction. These are detailed in the Working Group's **Operational Guidelines for the Inclusion of People of African Descent in Agenda 2030.**

These guidelines include—

1. Reversing the invisibility of people of African descent and their various concerns through collection, analysis and utilisation of data disaggregated by race

Data is related to identity; its promotion **fight**s invisibility. Where quantitative data is not available, innovative ways for data collection and analysis including qualitative data should be promoted.

It is important to note that people of African descent self-identify and have parallel means of obtaining data that may not be accessible to the government. A holistic approach to data requires consideration of data from people of African descent alongside that from the governments and the UN.

2. Full and effective participation, leadership and inclusion of people of African descent

People of African descent should constitute processes as leaders, equal contributors or participants, and subjects, but not objects. They should be discussed with, rather than being discussed about. The participation of men, women and youth of African descent in decision making in the political, social and economic spheres should be broad-based, and informed.

Due to regressive effects of history, affirmative action is a condition precedent toward full inclusion of people of African descent.

As an exception, policies that address matters **exclusive to people of African descent** should be led and implemented by them.

3. Mainstreaming and sustainability of advances towards the inclusion of people of African descent in all spheres of society

Ad hoc, reactive, and short term responses will not yield the desired result. The Working Group welcomes the recent developments of establishing racial justice portfolios and establishing relevant offices. These offices should be adequately resourced and mandated to have a long term impact.

Emphasis should be placed on generating a **multiplier effect** both in geographical space and time. Of necessity, people of African descent must be **empowered** with agency, knowledge, skills, and the requisite capacity to propel their own agenda. This requires decolonisation of processes, law and policy reform, and full inclusion in fiscal policy.

4. Addressing intersectionalities

Race-based discrimination is aggravated by other prohibited grounds of discrimination under international human rights law including gender, disability, age, migrant and other status.

Policies should be specifically tailored to address such intersectionalities.

5. Monitoring and Accountability

Racial justice is no longer a moral appeal but a legal obligation. Lip service to racism will not change the lived realities of people of African descent unless it leads to progressive actual interventions in law, policy and practice.

The Working Group calls for integration of racial justice performance indicators in monitoring and accountability mechanisms across the board. Racial justice audits should become a reality and the extensive body of work by the UN racial justice architecture would be instructive on both thematic and country specific situations.

Monitoring should reach all spheres including the media, social media platforms, education curricular, hiring and promotion criteria and practices, the housing market, social work, law enforcement, border controls, fiscal policy, alternative care institutions, academia and publishing, and entertainment, among others.

6. Reparation

The marginalization of people of African descent has been aggressive and broad-based; reparation should match that standard.

The Working Group envisages reparation in three forms and effects:

Compensatory: intended to remedy the harm of the past.

Corrective: end discriminatory practices by addressing stereotypes and prejudices based on race.

Redistributive: put an end to the unequal distribution of opportunity by way of affirmative action.

7. Children of African descent

The Working group has established that children of African descent are not considered children at all. They are disproportionately criminalised and exposed to law enforcement at the early stages of development; they are streamed in school; their families are policed often leading to separation of children from their families; they are institutionalised and

consequently their childhoods stolen in alternative care institutions by way of discriminatory practices. Images of children of African descent in dire situations of hunger and deprivation are often used by organisations, including the UN for fundraising and marketing.

All laws, policies and practices must give children of African descent a fresh start. They are humanity's opportunity to do it better this time. Humanity owes the best it all to give to all children irrespective of racial identity.

I thank you.