

**Statement of the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Intergovernmental
Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban
Declaration and Programme of Action
H.E. Marie Chantal Rwakazina**

**1st Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
5 December 2022**

Distinguished Chairperson,

Excellencies,

High Commissioner,
Members of the Permanent Forum,

Representatives of people of African descent around the world,
Colleagues and friends,

Today – the first day of the very first session of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent - is indeed a day of joy and celebration of the resilience of People of African Descent.

Permit me to commend your tireless efforts that continue to call up on the international community to effectively act on the long-standing racism endured by People of African Descent. It is thanks to you that this Forum exists and will prosper.

Today is a day of recognition at the international level of the rich heritage and contributions of People of African Descent to the development of our societies.

Today, is also a day of justice for the evils and suffering inflicted to our ancestors, for enslavement and trade of millions of Africans and for contemporary forms of racial discrimination and violence.

This Forum will definitely bring development. Here you will discuss how States could strengthen national programmes for eradicating poverty and social exclusion. You will collectively think how we could expand efforts to foster bilateral, regional and international cooperation in this regard.

This is a unique platform that brings this opportunity to listen, from an expert's perspective, to the voices of members of People of African descent, who will share with us their concerns and aspirations, with a view to contributing to the global fight against racism.

Allow me to recall that today we are also here to celebrate the beginning of a process that will lead us to have a strong international legal framework that will address systemic racism that affects millions of People of African Descent around the world: *A United Nations Declaration on the human rights of People of African Descent.*

This Declaration will also contribute to confront and redress the legacies of past violations and their present consequences, with targeted and concrete actions.

In October this year, following the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution [A/RES/76/226](#), the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, mechanism that I have the honour to Chair, started discussing the United Nations draft Declaration on the human rights of People of African Descent which highlights the challenges and the rights of People of African Descent. The draft presented was the result of a systematic review of existing international human rights law norms and standards and of inputs made by various stakeholders.

I would like to sincerely thank the Permanent Forum for its valuable contribution, for all the preparatory work you did, for the consultations with civil society and for the comprehensive research undertaken. I am particularly thankful to Mr. Pastor Murillo for his active engagement during the session. Your contribution inspired the draft document during the first round of its negotiations.

I am pleased to report that we made substantive advancements during that first reading of the draft.

The current draft as it stands today, starts with a broad preamble and advances concrete measures against racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent, and elaborates their rights in accordance with international human rights law. In doing so, the document approaches a wide variation of ancient and contemporary manifestations of racism and racial discrimination that have a particular negative impact on people of African descent and constitute a denial of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I would like to sincerely thank regional groups, Member States and civil society, who participated in the discussions of the above-mentioned draft declaration for their constructive engagement and for their willingness to advance the rights of people of African descent.

We made excellent advancements, but we still have a long way to go. We will continue our work during our next session and the role of this Forum is fundamental in order to have a strong Declaration. A comprehensive United Nations Declaration on the human rights of people of African descent would constitute crucial guidance for building equal and just societies for people of African descent.

We are convinced that the Declaration will significantly advance concrete measures against racism endured by people of African descent, in their specific cultural context and distinctive identities, and contribute towards the promotion of racial equality, justice and inclusion of people of African descent, strengthening the rule of law, democracy, peace and development of societies as a whole.

I look forward to stronger cooperation.