

Video message

**Third Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
Organizers: OHCHR/ Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
Geneva, Switzerland
16 April 2024**

Chair Designate June Soomer,

Excellencies, representatives from sister UN agencies, dear colleagues and friends,

This Forum is an important platform for elevating health and other concerns of people of African descent into global agendas.

When people of African descent experience racism and discrimination, it can have serious implications for their health and human rights.

Recent reports analyzing conditions in the Americas and Europe found that people of African descent experience increased poverty levels, less access to health services, and higher rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality than the general population.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated health inequities even further.

At WHO, we stand steadfast in our commitment to supporting national and local authorities in addressing racial discrimination and health inequities.

I echo the calls for a second International Decade for People of African Descent, to promote recognition and justice and fight systematic racism and discrimination.

WHO is committed to working together with the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and other key actors to improve health and address inequities.

May your discussions during this forum be fruitful and propel meaningful progress towards health equity, justice, and dignity for People of African descent around the world.

I thank you.

[199 words]