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A/TO: Mr. Elias M. Magosi, Executive Secretary
SADC House
Central Business District
Gaborone
Botswana

FAX: +267 397 28 48

TEL: +267 395 18 63

E-MAIL: registry@sadc.int

DE/FROM: Federica Donati 
Officer-in-Charge
Special Procedures Branch

FAX: +41 22 917 90 06

TEL: +41 22 917 13 58

E-MAIL: hrc-ie-albinism@un.org

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OBJET/SUBJECT: **Media Statement**

Please find attached a media statement from Mrs Mitti-Drummond, Independent expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with Albinism that will be issued today.

MEDIA STATEMENT



Adoption of a Declaration by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the Protection of Persons with albinism

GENEVA (22 August 2024) - A UN expert today commended the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for the adoption of a Declaration in which it reaffirms the region's commitments to the protection of the human rights of persons with albinism. Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond, the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, made the following statement:

"The adoption of a Declaration by SADC on the protection of the human rights of persons with albinism is a commendable development. The Declaration acknowledges that persons with albinism in the SADC region 'have faced prejudice and stigmatisation, as well as multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of visual impairment, colour, gender or age, which affect the exercise of their political, economic and social rights,' while also 'susceptible to the harmful effects of exposure to sunlight in the absence of sunscreen protection.'

Through the Declaration, SADC member states reaffirm their commitment to the principles of non-discrimination and underline that the situation of persons with albinism in the SADC region can 'be addressed through concerted and coordinated efforts' by committing to three priority areas of action—preventive, protective and accountability—focused on public education and awareness-raising campaigns, effective law enforcement, improved specialised services and bringing to justice perpetrators of violence against persons with albinism.

The adoption of the Declaration comes at a time when persons with albinism continue to suffer widespread discrimination, recurrent violence, including attacks and killings, cross-border trafficking of body parts, often perpetuated with impunity. Increasingly, persons with albinism are confronted with the negative effects of climate change on their physical and mental wellbeing and the daily struggles to access health care, especially sunscreen, with many suffering from long-term physical and psychological harm. Given this, I wholeheartedly commend SADC member states for their commitment to ensure sunscreen is added to national essential medicines lists.

I am encouraged by the SADC Declaration and its commitment to addressing the concerns and plight of persons with albinism through the priority areas of actions outlined in the Declaration. I also take note, that the Declaration foresees the need for partnership with various stakeholders, including civil society, cultural and faith-based organisations, in ensuring the safety and security of persons with albinism. If implemented, the measures could have a transformative impact on cultural perceptions and institutional responses to the rights of persons with albinism.

However, the impact of the Declaration would be dependent on the extent to which SADC member states put in place robust, practical and complementing measures and mechanisms, to ensure the full protection of the rights of persons with albinism. This would require concerted action and closer cooperation, including the development and enforcement of National Action Plans.

I call on SADC member states who have not yet signed the Declaration, to do so. I stand ready to support SADC in the implementation of the priority areas of action in accordance with my mandate in Human Rights Resolution 46 of 23 March 2021. As the SADC Declaration is a culmination of sustained advocacy and engagements with governments and international actors, the role of civil society, local communities, and the albinism movement, remains critical and provides an illustration of the value of collective action in the quest for the advancement of the rights of persons with albinism."

ENDS

The expert: Ms. Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond (Zambia) is the [Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with Albinism](#). She has worked in the area of human rights for almost 20 years, most recently as a senior international human rights consultant, including on the area of human rights and albinism.

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For additional information and **media requests** please contact Abou Jeng (jenga@un.org)

For **media inquiries** related to other UN independent experts, please contact Dharisha Indraguptha (dharisha.indraguptha@un.org) or John Newland (john.newland@un.org)

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