



The Commonwealth

1-5 May 2023

32nd Session of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Video Message: Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC.

(time limit: 3 minutes)

Chairperson

Members Working Group

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in this 32nd Session of the UN Working Group on Experts on People of African Descent.

I wish I could be with you in person, but I am grateful to the Working Group, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) for this invitation offer brief opening remarks.

Sustainable economic development for all is the fulcrum of both the UN and Commonwealth Charters.

These documents envisage a world of zero tolerance for racism and discrimination. Where no one is left behind.

Yet, we all know the world today is different.

This Group has ably shown that people of African descent continue to suffer from multi-layered forms of racism and socio-economic discrimination.

Tackling the causes and effects of poverty is essential if we are to remove the barriers which are holding people of African descent back.

Our collective push must be for a fairer, more equitable global economy, which ensures the meaningful participation of people of African descent at all levels.

To achieve the SDGs, this means meaningful, tailored, sustainable investment.

It also means scaling up our urgency and ambition in tackling climate change, which disproportionately affects communities of people of African descent who are already living with the legacy of exploitation, discrimination, and marginalisation.

That legacy is central to this issue.

Ending racism - and dealing with its history - is a moral and economic imperative.

Structural and systemic racism of people of African descent is a truly *global* problem since it prevents so many millions of people from maximising their economic potential.

I agree with the IMF that “a less racist society can be an economically stronger one”.

Wealth gaps between ethnic groups damages economies. Closing those gaps boosts economies.

These are simple facts, but the solutions are complex, and I look forward to continuing to partner with the Working Group to bring us closer to those solutions in the weeks, months and years to come.

Thank you.