



**International Day for People of African Descent
31 August 2024**

“The quest for self-determination: In solidarity with the people of Haiti and people of African descent worldwide”

Statement by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

GENEVA (04 September 2024) - On the 4th International Day for People of African Descent, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent highlights the significance of the right to self-determination.

Following centuries of enslavement, colonialism, segregation and subjugation, Africans and people of African descent fought with blood, sweat and tears, paid their oppressors with the scarce and hard-earned material resources in some instances, and obtained formal declarations of independence.

Haiti, the first free Black republic in the world, born out of a successful revolution by formerly enslaved Africans, paid an independence ransom, for a period of one hundred and twenty-two years, which contributed to leaving Haiti impoverished and many of its people destitute until today. The Working Group recalls the appeal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights during his visit to Haiti in February 2023, for a profound transformation in Haiti centred on human rights.¹ It is imperative that such a transformation tackle the root causes of the prevailing insecurity, including severe inequalities, entrenched corruption and impunity and increasingly deteriorating state of human rights in the country. Violence and insecurity have driven many Haitians to leave the country, exposing them to multiple human rights violations, as pointed out by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its statement of 28 April 2023.²

The Working Group stands in solidarity with Haiti, upon the occasion of two hundred and twenty years of independence and with people of African descent worldwide.

Recent events in different corners of the world have revealed the ongoing impact of the legacies of colonialism and enslavement. One hundred and twenty years since Haiti gained its independence, there are still seventeen Non-Self-Governing

¹ Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk concludes his official visit to Haiti](#), 10 February 2023.

² Statement by CERD, [Stop deporting Haitians on the move in Americas, UN Committee warns](#), 28 April 2023.

Territories³ today, many of them Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In many instances, significant proportions of their populations are African or of African descent, facing specific hardships because of cumulative disproportionate socio-economic outcomes.

In some cases where States have secured formal independence, the debt burden and the legacy of enslavement, colonization and subjugation have left endemic and structural poverty globally in areas inhabited by people of African descent within and among countries, even among high income countries, and cast the yoke of hegemonic development through an ecosystem of economic disempowerment.⁴

The decolonization discourse and activism for reparations is more resolute and unavoidable today, garnering support from Africans, people of African descent and those who stand in genuine solidarity with them from across the globe. The advocacy and activism are reflective and supportive of advancements such as the 2025 theme of the African Union: “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations”.⁵

As we conclude the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024, it is important to recognise and enhance the autonomy of people of African descent, accelerate justice for legacies of the past, and facilitate pathways for their development. The Working Group continues to advocate for a second Decade 2025-2034 for people of African descent, one that is grounded in the principles of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, that will be embraced by Member States and promulgated in every country, a decade in which governments will invest politically, technically, and financially in people of African descent, and protect, respect and fulfil their human rights.

The Working Group reiterates its commitment and support to the ongoing drafting of the United Nations Declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

The Working Group echoes the joint statement of UN experts of 29 August 2024 calling for the inclusion of people of African descent in all development frameworks⁶ and, in this regard, emphasises the importance of its Operational Guidelines on the inclusion of People of African Descent in the 2030 agenda.⁷ A viable future for Africans and people of African descent is predicated on racial justice that eradicates structural, institutional and systemic racism and Afrophobia

³ Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24), [Non-Self-Governing Territories](#).

⁴ Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, [A/HRC/54/67: Economic empowerment of people of African descent - Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent](#).

⁵ [Assembly/AU/Dec.884\(XXXVII\), Decision on Building a United Front to Advance the Cause of Justice and the Payment of Reparations to Africans \(in Implementation of the Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.847\(XXXVI\)\)](#), 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, 17-18 February 2024.

⁶ Statement by UN experts, [Time for decisive action against racism and racial discrimination: UN experts](#), 29 August 2024.

⁷ [Operational Guidelines on inclusion of People of African Descent in the 2030 agenda \(ohchr.org\)](#)

including in digitalization and AI, reparatory justice that addresses historical wrongs, and environmental justice that protects the future of generations to come.

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The [Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent](#) was established in 2002 by the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/68 (as a Special Procedure). The Working Group is composed of five independent experts: **Barbara G. Reynolds (Chair), Bina D'Costa, Dominique Day, Catherine Namakula and Miriam Ekiudoko.**

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