

To the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent towards its midterm review report on the UN International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024

Esteemed members of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD), please find below some remarks and recommendations for your consideration towards your midterm review report on the UN International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024 (IDPAD).

We, the undersigned organizations, are members of the International Coalition for People of African Descent (ICPAD)—an international civil society coalition that has been formed around IDPAD and the forthcoming UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent—with CSOs from Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, the US and Europe. Other members of ICPAD have submitted a position paper to WGEPAD on the disproportionate effect of COVID19 on people of African descent.

General Comments and Recommendations

- 1. IDPAD has received relatively little recognition by UN Member States at the national levels.** While not diminishing [national initiatives during the past 5 years to promote the rights of people of African descent](#), few countries around the world have launched or in other ways officially marked IDPAD. Among the few countries that have—including Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and Canada—none have offered measures to effectively address issues of structural racial discrimination facing PAD. Generally, around the world IDPAD has received little recognition and remained relatively anonymous.
- 2. It should not be expected that the second half of IDPAD will be more successful in launching or otherwise officially marking it at the national levels.** The likelihood of a domestic launch of IDPAD will decrease rather than increase in its second half, among other things, since it would seem too late to launch IDPAD after half of it has already transpired.
- 3. The first half of IDPAD has had the greatest impact at the international levels, not least at the United Nations (UN).** Prominent among the successes of the first half of IDPAD has been the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions towards the establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and the drafting of a UN Declaration on the human rights of people of African descent as a first step towards a binding agreement. The European Union (EU) Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has marked IDPAD in the first EU report on discrimination against people of African descent, *Being Black in the EU* (2018), and the European Parliament marked IDPAD in its landmark resolution on fundamental rights of people of African descent (2019).
- 4. For the remainder of IDPAD it will be expedient for the UN, the Human Rights Council (HRC), UNGA, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

(OHCHR) and WGEPAD to primarily focus on the further establishment of the objectives of IDPAD at the UN and other international levels. Although the Decade was created primarily to encourage states to develop measures at the national levels around “recognition, justice and development,” it is unlikely that the Decade will be more successful in accomplishing this in its second half. At least not due to any additional midterm review recommendations to or from the UN. Whereas there is much that can be done as a result of midterm review recommendations to further establish the objectives of the Decade at the UN (and other international levels).

Specific Recommendations

- 5. The human rights of people of African descent and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** Achieving the goals of the Decade and combating structural racial discrimination against people African descent is integral to Agenda 2030, “leaving no one behind” and achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability. Part of the stated vision of Agenda 2030 is

a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity.

This should be emphasized and acted on by the UN and its Member States in the second half of IDPAD. Especially SDGs 10, 16 and 17 should be linked to achieving “recognition, justice and development” for people of African descent, including both within countries as well as in the international relationships of majority African descendent countries of the Caribbean.

- 6. PAD at the intersections of international and national dimensions of racial discrimination.** As has been recognized by generations of Pan-Africanists, the human rights situation of people of African descent is not limited to the internal affairs of countries, but has international as well as national dimensions. The *Durban Declaration and Programme of Action* (DDPA) calls on states to recognize and address racial discrimination at the international level as well as domestically, especially with respect to the vestiges of colonialism. The second half of IDPAD should ensure that its objectives of “recognition, justice and development” include addressing international inequities and injustices suffered by majority African descendent countries of the Caribbean and by extension African countries too. Including, as affirmed by the DDPA, the SDGs and the many UNGA and HRC resolutions towards a democratic and equitable international order, inter alia, debt-sustainability and debt-cancellation, democratic participation of developing countries in the WTO and other international organizations, fair, equitable and multilateral trade as well as access to justice for the lasting consequences of colonialism, enslavement, native genocide and systemic racial discrimination (apartheid) as crimes against humanity.
- 7. Pan-Africanism for human rights and “leaving no one behind.”** As recognised by generations of Pan-Africanists, racial discrimination against Africans and people of African descent around the world is interconnected and interrelated and should be

addressed as such. Pan-Africanism is central to the African Union (AU) *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* and in turn Agenda 2063 is integral to the UN *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (as mentioned twice in it). The second half of IDPAD should serve to institutionally strengthen Pan-Africanism at the UN, in UN-AU collaborations, UN-CARICOM collaborations and South-South collaborations between the AU and CARICOM.

- 8. UN system cooperation, synergies and mainstreaming of the promotion of human rights of people of African descent.** Although there is due recognition of the human rights of people of African descent in the “Durban-mechanisms” at the UN, there could be more cooperation, synergy and mainstreaming of the promotion of the human rights of people of African descent across the UN system. For example, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has done plenty of work on the human rights of indigenous people, but nothing on the human rights of people of African descent. Yet, with respect to the structure and history of the global economy and the situations of Caribbean and African states, there is no reason why they should not be interested in this. Similarly may be said of various “special procedures”—among them, the UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-recurrence.
- 9. Greater weight to social and economic rights for people of African descent.** COVID19 is laying bare centuries old social and economic inequities along racial lines—within as well as between countries. People of African descent are disproportionately affected by the current pandemic as are Caribbean and African countries. Although the pandemic has not spread widely in the region, Caribbean countries have already had to take out emergency loans of nearly 2 billion USD from the IMF. Most of the emergency loans from the IMF and World Bank have gone to states in so-called “Sub-Saharan Africa” ([by the IMF](#)). From the IMF alone to a tune of nearly 10 billion USD. Besides being a health crisis, the pandemic is also a socio-economic crisis. Likewise, besides being environmental crises, ecological emergencies in the future will likely also be socio-economic crises. It should be clearer now than ever that the UN system need to put a greater emphasis on civil and economic rights—not least with respect to Africans and people of African descent. This too should be reflected in the second half of IDPAD.
- 10. Equality data for PAD and state recognition of structural racial discrimination.** We commend WGEPAD for pointing out the critical importance of equality data on people of African descent to monitor, recognize and effectively address structural racial discrimination and inequities suffered by people of African descent. We recommend that awareness raising among Member States, state agencies, international organizations, equality bodies, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations on the critical importance of equality data on people of African descent, and its relevance to fulfilling SDGs and human rights obligations, is further highlighted and pursued by the UN OHCHR, the HRC and the various mechanisms against racial discrimination during the second half of IDPAD. In this context, it should be stressed that states, according to the *International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD) and other instruments, have an obligation to protect people of African descent against structural racial discrimination (not merely isolated incidents of discrimination) and to develop “special measures” for people of African descent to ensure, protect and promote their

equal enjoyment of rights. For instance, the obligations of states to recognize and address structural forms of racial discrimination could be elaborated by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in a new General Recommendation. The lack of disaggregated data by race during emergencies, disasters and pandemics (such as COVID-19) has cost African descendent communities around the world many lives, livelihoods, lack of recognition, human dignity and basic rights.

- 11. Encourage member states to do more on national action plans to combat racial discrimination against people of African descent.** Member States should be informed about the critical importance of applying a “structural” view on racial discrimination against people of African descent and the human rights obligations to develop comprehensive measures, including national action plans, to address such structural racial discrimination.
- 12. Empower civil society organizations to implement the objectives of IDPAD and engage the UN and Member States on the human rights of people of African descent.** The UN OHCHR should set up and actively promote a Voluntary Fund to which both states and private donors can allocate earmarked funds for civil society projects (also domestic projects) and engagement at the UN, including in the forthcoming Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (here “civil society” should include so-called “grassroots” or “community” organizations around the world without a legal standing as organizations in their countries). A similar Voluntary Fund already exists for the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which has been relatively well-funded thanks largely to private donations. The UN should encourage and cooperate with civil society and the private sector to raise funds for a Voluntary Fund for the human rights of people of African descent.
- 13. A Permanent Forum that is effective and empowering to people of African descent.** Among the most prominent outcomes of IDPAD will likely be the establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on PAD. This Forum should be organized and funded (through a Voluntary Fund) so as to the greatest extent possible allow civil society to be involved in its deliberations, advice and recommendations to the UN and its Member States.
- 14. A UN Declaration that effectively expands the protection and promotion of human rights of people of African descent.** Another prominent outcome of IDPAD will be the drafting of a UN Declaration on the human rights of people of African descent (as a first step towards a binding agreement). This Declaration should effectively accentuate and expand the protection and promotion of human rights of people of African descent to include, among other things, access to domestic and international justice for the vestiges of colonialism, enslavement, systemic racial discrimination (apartheid) and the adverse effects of climate change, environmental disasters, pandemics and lack of equal socio-economic opportunities internationally as well as domestically.

Signed by,

1. **Abdul Mageed Educational Trust, UK**
2. **Addis Ababa University Center for Human Rights, Ethiopia**
3. **Africana Institute for Creativity, Recognition and Elevation, USA**
4. **African Foundation for Migration and Development (AFMD), Switzerland**

5. **African Lawyers Association of Ireland**, Ireland
6. **African Scholars Association Ireland (AFSAI)**, Ireland
7. **African Social Workers**, Ireland
8. **African Voices Forum**, UK
9. **Africa Solidarity Centre**, Ireland
10. **Afro Empowerment Center**, Denmark
11. **Afro-European Medical and Research Network (AEMRN)**, Switzerland
12. **Afrosvenskarnas riksorganisation/Afro-Swedish National Organization (ASR)**, Sweden
13. **Bealup-Agro-Business**, Senegal
14. **BlackUnityEngland**, UK
15. **Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA)**, USA
16. **Center for International Policy--Africa Program**, USA
17. **eDundalk**, Ireland
18. **European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD)**
19. **European Network of Women of African Descent (ENWAD)**
20. **Fédération Panafricaine des Associations et Clubs pour L'Unité Africaine (FEPAC/UA)**, West Africa
21. **Fundacja Afryka Connect/ Afryka Connect Foundation**, Poland
22. **Generation ADEFRA**, Germany
23. **Global Afrikan Congress (GAC)**
24. **IDPAD Coalition UK**, UK
25. **Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (ISD-Bund E.V.)**, Germany
26. **Institute of Afrikology**, South Africa
27. **Justice Roundtable**, USA
28. **Ligali**, UK
29. **Link Africa 365 for Trade and Development**, Gambia/West Africa
30. **Making Education a Priority (MEaP)**, UK
31. **Medical Whistleblower Advocacy Network**, USA
32. **Migrant Workers Union of South Africa**, South Africa
33. **Mimosa Midwives Community Practice**, UK
34. **Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD)**, USA and Nigeria
35. **Mülheim United E.V.**, Germany
36. **National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC)**, USA
37. **New Urban Collective (NUC)**, Netherlands
38. **New York Women and Girls of African Descent Caucus, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean (NGOCSW)**, USA
39. **Northamptonshire Somali Community**, UK
40. **Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality**, Northern Ireland
41. **Observatory of Justice for Afrodescendants in Latin America (OJALA)**, Florida International University, USA
42. **Organization for the Rights of People of African Descent**, Guadeloupe, French West Indies
43. **Organization SAN PON**, Haiti
44. **PAD Belgium**, Belgium
45. **PAD Business Network Foundation**, Belgium
46. **Salifu Dagarti Foundation**, UK
47. **Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference**, USA

48. **Save the Woman**, UK
49. **Soul Rebel Movement**, Netherlands
50. **Ubele Initiative**, UK
51. **UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab, People of African Descent and the SDGs E-team**
52. **United African Women Organization**, Greece
53. **U.S. Africa Institute**, USA
54. **Virgin Islands Youth Advocacy Coalition, Inc.**, Virgin Islands (U.S.)
55. **Women's All Points Bulletin (WAPB)**, USA