

Joint Statement for the WGEPAD 26th Session – Regional public meeting for Asia and Pacific, November 23, Monday 0930-1130 CET

Good day, everyone. On behalf of the people of African descent (PAD) in the Asian continent, represented by the **Appreciate Africa Network in China**, the **African/American Coaches and Athletes of the Philippines (AFCAAP)**, and the **African Diaspora Insight** representing the United Nations (UN) PAD Human Rights Fellows of 2018, we enjoin member states of the UN and civil society organizations in the continent to support and officially launch the International Decade for People of African Descent and implement the key provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

We encourage member states and civil society organizations to take the following actions in light of the exacerbating conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic in the region:

1. *Recognize* the presence and contributions of people of African descent in their respective societies. We request government and social institutions to collect and publish data on the population and demographics of people of African descent in their communities in order to assess their living conditions and develop interventions specific to them.
2. *Promote* the inclusion of racial equality, diversity and awareness in the educational systems of member states to combat deep rooted prejudice, racial profiling, hate speech and violence against people of African descent. The pandemic has heightened Afrophobia, especially in China, as some of our people were denied treatment in hospitals, evicted from their accommodations and dismissed from their workplaces in spite of valid contracts. These incidents left hundreds if not thousands without income and the capacity to sustain themselves during the periods of community quarantines.
3. *Fulfill* state obligations under the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) specifically the adoption of domestic legislation on non-discrimination based on race, color, descent, ethnicity and nationality. Many people of

African descent were deprived of access to legal redress for the injustices they suffered during the pandemic in China. In the Philippines, legislative bills drafted have yet to be enacted, making it difficult for people of African descent to overcome discrimination.

4. *Fulfill* state obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) combating human and sex trafficking. Cases of women of African descent being trafficked to China and forced into prostitution have been recorded in the past few years. While the ease of acquiring an entry visa has been a positive development, the non-renewal and difficulty to obtain work visas leave women more vulnerable.

We would also like to recognize and commend the Chinese government for having assisted distressed Afrodescendants during the early stages of the pandemic through a one-time voluntary repatriation program for undocumented individuals without imposing any penalties or detaining them. We hope other governments and civil society organizations in the region also take the necessary steps to promote the decade and the Durban declaration in order to improve the conditions of people of African descent in the Asia Pacific. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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