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**Human Rights Council**

**Forty-fifth session**

Agenda items \* and \*

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of  
the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General  
Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related  
forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation  
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Midterm report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the activities of her Office in follow-up to the implementation of the programme of activities within the framework of the International Decade for People of African Descent[[1]](#footnote-1)\*

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| *Summary* |
| This report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Human Rights Council resolution 42/29 which requests the High Commissioner, in her capacity as coordinator of the Decade, to submit a midterm report on her activities in follow-up to the implementation of the programme of activities within the framework of the Decade to the Human Rights Council at its forty-fifth session. |
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I. Introduction

1. This mid-term report[[2]](#footnote-2) is submitted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as Coordinator of the International Decade for People of African Descent, to the 45th session of the Human Rights Council, on the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in follow-up to the implementation of the programme of activities within the framework of the International Decade for People of African descent (2015-2024).[[3]](#footnote-3) This report outlines the various actions that the Office has taken to follow up on the implementation of the Programme of Activities. OHCHR, through its headquarters and field presences around the world, has been central to supporting States in implementing the Decade’s Programme of Activities. Actions have also been taken in collaboration with UN system and regional partners, and African descent civil society has been included and consulted, and supported many initiatives in relation to the Decade. Finally, the report presents the further necessary actions, which urgently need to be taken at the mid-term of the Decade to follow-up on the implementation of the Programme of Activities of the International Decade for People of African descent.

2. The mid-term report is submitted as protests and movements against racial discrimination are taking place in many countries across the globe. Protests were sparked in May 2020 by the killing of an unarmed African-American, Mr. George Floyd, at the hands of the police in the US, and drew the attention of the world to the pervasive racial discrimination experienced by people of African descent worldwide. Following his killing and the protests that followed, the Human Rights Council held an urgent debate on 17 and 18 June 2020, and adopted a resolution requesting inter alia “the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the assistance of relevant special procedure mandate holders, to prepare a report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies, especially those incidents that resulted in the death of George Floyd and other Africans and people of African descent, to contribute to accountability and redress for victims.”.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Council also requested that government responses to anti-racism peaceful protests, including the alleged use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders and journalists be examined.[[5]](#footnote-5)

3. The Office is working diligently to ensure the full implementation of this mandate. In preparing that report, the Office, with the assistance of special procedures mandate holders, will be considering issues of systemic and structural racism, and violations under international human rights law against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement, bearing in mind that cases of extrajudicial killings of people of African descent and the lack of accountability and redress for victims often have their root causes in historically entrenched structural racism originating from slavery, the slave trade and colonialism.

4. In preparing that report, the Office will ensure meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders, in particular communities of people of African descent.

II. Background and current context of the Decade

5. The Programme of Activities of the International Decade for people of African descent is the agreed international framework that the international community is using to focus its efforts to improve the lives of millions of people of African descent worldwide. The main general objective of the Programme of Activities is to strengthen national, regional and international action and cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.[[6]](#footnote-6)

6. There are a number of contemporary issues, developments and initiatives that have an impact and convey the critical ongoing relevance and the urgent need to step up actions to implement the Programme of Activities of the Decade, which are important to highlight here.

A. The impacts of COVID-19 on people of African descent

7. The devastating health consequences of COVID-19 for many people of African descent have been acknowledged, as they have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Structural inequalities and racial discrimination have been manifested in access to medicines, medical procedures, and are likely also to have had an impact on diagnosis and treatment.[[7]](#footnote-7) Additionally, people of African descent represent a significant percentage of frontline workers who are more exposed to the risk of contamination, and have been making up the large numbers of those infected or dying in the pandemic.

8. Where disaggregated data is available, stark racial disparities are evident. For example, there are now a number of studies that document that people of African descent have higher infection and mortality rates. Also, their situation is aggravated by several underlying health conditions that enhance risk and vulnerability to the COVID-19 virus, often symptoms of prevalent structural racism.[[8]](#footnote-8)

9. OHCHR has prepared a Guidance note on racial discrimination in the context of the COVID-19 crisis,[[9]](#footnote-9) which outlines the issues particularly impacting the human rights of people of African descent, including right to health, adequate housing, and access to education, and issues of food security, law enforcement and the administration of justice. The Guidance provides some recommendations as well as examples of some promising actions.

1. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA+20)

10. The Programme of Activities of the International Decade recognizes that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)[[10]](#footnote-10) is a comprehensive United Nations framework and a solid foundation for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and represents a new stage in the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to restore the rights and dignity of people of African descent.

11. The DDPA is the genesis of the international recognition of Africans and people of African descent as victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,[[11]](#footnote-11) noting that slavery, the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism were among the sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against them.

12. The year 2021 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by consensus of the DDPA in Durban, South Africa. The Human Rights Council has requested the commencement of preparations for the commemoration, in 2021, of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and the submission of a comprehensive report on its implementation by the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to the Human Rights Council at its forty-fifth session and the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.[[12]](#footnote-12)

13. In this regard, and given the current international context, all States should see the 20th anniversary as an opportunity to reiterate their support to the DDPA and renew their efforts to implement the comprehensive Programme of Action. Greater support for the DPPA will also engender greater cooperation and synergy to implement the Programme of Activities of the Decade. Since 2001, OHCHR has been responsible for supporting implementation of the DDPA in several ways, such as through the four DDPA follow-up mechanisms, and it will continue to provide substantive and technical support in order to eradicate all forms or racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including against people of African descent, in every region.

C. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and people of African descent

14. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015-2030) commenced the same year as the International Decade for People of African descent (2015-2024). Both provide a mutually reinforcing framework, which can assist in overcoming the historically-rooted systemic and structural discrimination against people of African descent around the world. The prohibition of racism is reiterated several times in the 2030 Agenda,[[13]](#footnote-13) and targets 10.2 and 17.18 refer to data disaggregated by race.[[14]](#footnote-14)

15. The right to development of people of African descent, a crucial part of the Decade’s development theme, is very relevant, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. The Programme of Activities of the Decade also calls upon States to remove all obstacles that prevent the equal enjoyment by people of African descent of all human rights, economic, social, cultural, civil and political, including the right to development.[[15]](#footnote-15)

16. While there is no specific reference to people of African descent in the 2030 Agenda, the three pillars of the Decade – recognition, justice and development – all have strong links to the Declaration on the Right to Development. The 2030 Agenda should be implemented in conjunction with other existing commitments to improve the lives of people of African descent, guiding States, people of African descent, the United Nations system, regional organizations, and other stakeholders and partners, in achieving each of the Goals.

17. OHCHR is assisting the work of the Working Group of Experts for People of African Descent in the development of Operational Guidelines on inclusion of people of African descent in the 2030 Agenda. This document will serve as a tool for UN Country Teams, Member States, financial and development institutions, and all interested stakeholders to assist them in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, with a specific focus on people of African descent.

D. Systemic and structural racism, including racial discrimination in law enforcement and racial profiling

18. Notwithstanding the proclamation of the Decade in 2015 and some efforts around the world to improve the human rights of people of African descent, they continue to experience poor health-care, inadequate education, limited employment prospects, discrimination in housing, ill-treatment by public authorities and officials, restrictions to civil and political rights, disproportionate police violence from law enforcement, discriminatory incarceration, racial profiling and structural racial discrimination across the globe. Racial discrimination has continued largely unabated and access to justice and accountability for far too many people of African descent continues to be a very distant reality.

19. As mentioned above, during its 43rd session, the Human Rights Council held an “Urgent Debate on current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality against people of African descent and violence against peaceful protests”. The High Commissioner in her statement[[16]](#footnote-16) on 17 June 2020, noted that the killing of Mr. George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis has come to symbolize “the systemic racism that harms millions of people of African descent – causing pervasive, daily, life-long, generational and too often, lethal harm”. She added that “(s)ystemic racial discrimination extends beyond any expression of individual hatred. It results from bias in multiple systems and institutions of public policy, which separately and together perpetuate and reinforce barriers to equality.”

20. Racial profiling is a key feature of racial discrimination in law enforcement. Under the justice theme of Programme of Activities, States are urged to take further access to justice measures “designing, implementing and enforcing effective measures to eliminate the phenomenon popularly known as “racial profiling” and to “eliminating institutionalized stereotypes concerning people of African descent and applying appropriate sanctions against law enforcement officials who act on the basis of racial profiling”.[[17]](#footnote-17) The COVID-19 pandemic has similarly highlighted that people of African descent were likely to face disproportionate checks and surveillance amidst the pandemic.[[18]](#footnote-18)

21. Last year, the Office prepared the report of the Secretary-General on the Programme of Activities for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African descent, which had as its thematic focus racial profiling, providing information about the racial profiling of people of African descent, discussing the applicable international legal framework, and documenting some examples of good practices.[[19]](#footnote-19) OHCHR has also been working with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the preliminary drafting process of general recommendation Number 36 on preventing and combatting racial profiling, which took place during the 98th session of the Committee, from 23 April to 10 May 2019.

III. Implementation at the mid-term of the Decade: High Commissioner’s activities in follow-up to the Decade

A. Debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent

22. On 13 March 2020, during the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, OHCHR organized the “Debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent” to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.[[20]](#footnote-20) Convened by the President of the HRC, and with the participation of representatives of the Governments of Canada and Ghana, United Nations Population Fund and civil society, the debate assessed the level of implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

23. During the debate, the High Commissioner recalled that much more needs to be done by all States and stakeholders to advance the equality and dignity of people of African descent and must include addressing disproportionate police violence, mass incarceration, racial profiling and systemic and structural racial discrimination impinging on the human rights of people of African descent.

B. Assisting implementation of the Programme of Activities of the Decade by States

24. As envisaged by the Decade,[[21]](#footnote-21) efforts and initiatives have been undertaken by States to prohibit discrimination and segregation and to engender the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political rights. Several States have been undertaking legislative measures, actions in respect of monitoring bodies and complaints mechanisms, awareness-raising and education, data collection, community engagement and accountability, which are welcome.

25. A compilation of the various actions taken by States, drawn from the successive annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent,[[22]](#footnote-22) can be found on the website of the International Decade for People of African descent maintained by the UN Department of Global Communications,[[23]](#footnote-23) as well as on the anti-discrimination database maintained by the Office.[[24]](#footnote-24) A number of these measures taken by States have been, in part, due to the advocacy, technical advice and continued engagement of OHCHR.

C. Launching the International Decade for People of African descent

26. As part of the recognition theme under the Programme of Activities, under education on equality and awareness-raising, States should celebrate the launch of the International Decade at the national level, and develop national programmes of action and activities for the full and effective implementation of the Decade.[[25]](#footnote-25) The Decade has been launched in Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Guatemala, Jamaica, and the Netherlands. OHCHR colleagues were able to assist and participate in the launches, which took place in Canada, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, as well as the launch of the Decade by the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa on 24 April 2018.

27. These launches are very welcome and many more States and civil society actors are strongly encouraged to engage at every level to recognize and implement the Programme of Activities of the Decade for People of African descent. The Decade should be launched in every country as soon as possible, as it is one of the most symbolic and essential elements of recognition as recommended by the Programme of Activities.

D. Supporting policies, programmes and national action plans

28. The Programme of Activities emphasizes policies, programmes and projects, recommending that States should adopt, strengthen and implement action-oriented policies, programmes and projects to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance designed to ensure full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent.[[26]](#footnote-26) States are also encouraged to elaborate national plans of action to promote diversity, equality, equity, social justice, and equality of opportunity and the participation of all.

29. OHCHR, both from its headquarters and through its field presences, has assisted the development of anti-racial discrimination laws and national action plans by providing expert and technical advice to authorities including in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Kazakhstan, Mexico and Peru. The Office has also been providing expert advice on the drafting of anti-discrimination laws and national action plans, which specifically focus on the human rights of people of African descent.

30. OHCHR has also been providing technical support on implementing the Decade at the regional level through our engagement with the African Union Commission, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Organization of American States. The establishment of the Inter-American Network of High Authorities on Policies for Afro-descent Populations to help coordinate and promote action by national authorities, and the regional Plan of Action for the Decade for People of African Descent in the Americas (2016-2025) adopted by the Organization of American States, are welcome achievements.

E. Organizing regional meetings and engagement with various regional organizations

31. The Programme of Activities provides for the hosting of regional meetings, pursuant to paragraph 69(c) of General Assembly resolution 69/16. Three meetings have been organized by OHCHR to raise awareness about the Decade, and consider its thematic programme of justice, recognition and development through a regional lens and with the participation of States representatives and others stakeholders, including civil society representatives of African descent. In preparing these meetings, OHCHR ensured participation of women and young people of African descent as experts and participants, and that issues of multiple discrimination and gender and race were considered in the programmes of the meetings.

32. In Brasilia from 3-4 December 2015, OHCHR organized, with the host country of Brazil, the **Regional Meeting of the International Decade for People of African Descent for the Region of Latin America and the Caribbean**. As the outcome of the meeting, the Government delegates from the Latin American and Caribbean States adopted a Declaration[[27]](#footnote-27) recalling the Programme of Activities of the Decade and reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels. The States agreed, inter alia, to reaffirm support for the creation of the Forum on People of African Descent, and also that the mandate of the Forum will consist of a consultation mechanism for all people of African descent and of an advisory body to the Human Rights Council about the difficulties and needs of people of African descent; to support the initiative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on reparations; to support, in particular, the elaboration of a draft United Nations declaration on the promotion of and full respect to the human rights of people of African descent, stressing the importance of starting the work as soon as possible and to offer substantive contributions to its drafting; to adopt affirmative actions to reduce and remedy disparities and inequalities, even to accelerate social inclusion and to close gaps in access to education and employment, resulting from historical and current injustices according to particularities of each country, and, to promote and implement measures to combat and punish the practice of racial profiling and promote training and awareness-raising programs for the police and judicial officers in the identification, investigation and punishment of that practice.

33. The **Regional meeting for Europe, Central Asia and North America** was organized by OHCHR in Geneva on 23-24 November 2017 and the outcome document[[28]](#footnote-28) adopted by the representatives of States from Europe, Central Asia and North America reaffirmed the commitments contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action with regard to people of African descent. In the document, they reiterated the importance, inter alia: to implement and enforce effective measures to eliminate any practice of “racial profiling”; and to collect, compile, analyse, disseminate and publish reliable and disaggregated statistical data, in accordance with national legislation, at the national and local levels and take all other related measures necessary to assess regularly the situation of people of African descent who are victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

34. In the document, the representatives of States also reiterated the importance to combat effectively prejudices and harmful and wrongful stereotypes which may lead to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and, in this regard, to implement educational, cultural and awareness-raising programs aiming at promoting a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies while stressing the importance that textbooks and other educational materials reflect historical facts accurately as they relate to past tragedies and atrocities, in particular slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism.

35. Finally, they expressed their continued engagement to dialogue in an open, constructive and transparent manner with all relevant stakeholders, particularly with States from Africa and other regional groups, with regard to the implementation of the Programme of Activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent, including on the establishment of a Forum to serve as a consultation mechanism, to be provided by one of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms, as well as the consideration of the possible elaboration of a draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.

36. OHCHR in cooperation with the African Union Commission (AUC) also organized the [**Regional meeting for Africa under the International Decade for People of African Descent**](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/InternationalDecade/Pages/RegionalMeetingAfrica2019.aspx)[[29]](#footnote-29) which took place from 23-24 October 2019 and was hosted by the Government of Senegal in Dakar. It brought together over 400 representatives of African governments, experts from the region of Africa and the diaspora, United Nations mandate-holders and human rights mechanisms, UNESCO and UNDP as well as civil society and young people. The regional meeting raised the awareness of African Governments and stakeholders about the International Decade; discussed the importance of places of memory, history of slavery and the slave trade, and bridges between Africa and the African diaspora; and, considered the links between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the International Decade.

37. In Dakar, the High Commissioner met with young civil society activists from around Africa and the African diaspora, and was impressed by their energy, innovation and views, as well as their interest to work with OHCHR and other stakeholders in bringing greater attention and momentum to the implementation of the Decade. While in Dakar, OHCHR organized with the AUC, a first “youth lab” where young people considered ways to connect, contribute and reach out to their peers around the world about the Decade, particularly through the creation of user-friendly materials, and expanding our use of social media and online platforms to facilitate communications and awareness-raising about the Decade. It was agreed that these ideas will be further developed in the months ahead.

38. Since officially launching the International Decade on 24 April 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, OHCHR has been advising and working with the AUC on the Decade, including on the “African Union Continental Symposium on the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent” in Accra, Ghana, in September 2018, which developed an Action Plan for the African Union activities in this regard.

39. The European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) has been central in advocating for the Decade, and calling for strategies and plans against racism and on specific issues such Afrophobia. On 26 March 2019, the European Parliament adopted for the first time a resolution on the Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent, recognising “Afrophobia”,“Afri-phobia” and “anti-black racism” as a specific form of racism, including any act of violence or discrimination, fuelled by historical abuses and negative stereotyping, and leading to the exclusion and dehumanization of people of African descent.[[30]](#footnote-30)

40. Since the start of the Decade, OHCHR has been engaging with ARDI and the European Union institutions, such as the European Institute against Racism and Intolerance and the Fundamental Rights Agency on issues of data collection, role of national institutions, hate speech and hate crimes, and national action plans under the framework of the Decade.

F. Supporting and engaging with intergovernmental bodies and human rights mechanisms

41. OHCHR plays an important secretariat function in supporting the work of the various intergovernmental bodies and human rights mechanisms relevant to implementing the Programme of Activities of the International Decade for People of African descent, such as the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards, and the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

42. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) has been a crucial mechanism for making proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent. Since 2005, over 19 fact-finding country-visits have taken place, which allow the experts to see first-hand issues of racial discrimination affecting people of African descent, and for tailored recommendations to improve the human rights of people of African descent.[[31]](#footnote-31) These visits also allow for interaction with Government officials, civil society and people of African descent and can lead to reflection and actions, such as the apology by the Government of Belgium for the abduction of “mixed-race” children in Belgian-colonized Burundi, Congo and Rwanda, and the ongoing initiatives to change street names in Germany, following visits of the Working Group to Germany[[32]](#footnote-32) and Belgium[[33]](#footnote-33) in 2017 and 2019, respectively. These country visits are beneficial to States and other countries are encouraged to extend invitations to the WGEPAD to visit or conduct follow-up visits in the future.

43. The High Commissioner made the opening statement on 9 December 2019, at a special event at the United Nations in Geneva, entitled Ensuring Recognition, Justice and Development, which was organized by the WGEPAD, OHCHR and the Permanent Missions of Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, This high-level event raised awareness, allowed for an exchange of views and galvanized support among States, civil society organizations and the general public for the International Decade for People of African Descent and a United Nations Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent. Panellists at the ambassadorial level advocated for political momentum by States and other stakeholders in implementing the Decade’s Programme of Activities.

44. The High Commissioner has held several meetings with these Chairpersons and mandate-holders to increase cooperation to speed up implementation of the Decade through and across the various mandates.

G. Working with United Nations entities to implement the Programme of Activities of the Decade

45. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in partnership with OHCHR, the Government of Costa Rica, and other stakeholders, has convened events to provide a platform for advocacy and dialogue on issues affecting women and girls of African descent. UNFPA is also supporting national institutions in strengthening their capacity for population data collection, disaggregation and analysis to promote statistical visibility for people of African descent in national policies, including in Chile, Colombia, Haiti and Nicaragua.

46. OHCHR has been working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in several areas to implement the Programme of Activities, including the management of memory sites and itineraries, the elaboration of teaching and promotional materials, and the organization of a series of thematic meetings to deepen reflection on specific issues concerning people of African descent not yet fully explored.[[34]](#footnote-34) OHCHR has been collaborating with UNESCO on the **“**[Slave Route Project: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/)**”** which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.[[35]](#footnote-35)

47. OHCHR coordinates the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,[[36]](#footnote-36) which brings together over 20 UN Departments, Agencies, Programmes and Funds, all of which have identified focal points for this purpose, in an inter-agency platform to address issues of racial discrimination and the protection of national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including on issues of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, age and other grounds. The Network recently adopted a statement entitled “Leave No One Behind”, specifically referring to people of African descent in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The UN Network provides a good system for increasing inter-agency collaboration on issues affecting people of African descent.

48. OHCHR’s work to implement the Programme of Activities is often carried out on the ground through its field presences around the world. The Office has also been able to count on support from key UN entities in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and in Asia, including from UNDP offices in every region.

H. Supporting civic space for people of African descent, especially young people of African descent

49. The Decade has also been the framework and inspiration for several hundred grassroots and civil society groups, coalitions, networks and movements of people of African descent around the world. There have been meetings, seminars, competitions, conferences, panels, blogs, consultations, concerts, “emancipation events”, and more recently webinars and online events.[[37]](#footnote-37) For example, for the past three years, the Office has sponsored and participated in the Afrodysée fashion event in Geneva, which is aimed at bringing recognition and awareness to the Decade and to culture and history of Africa, people of African descent, while exposing African descent designers to a broader audience.[[38]](#footnote-38)

50. OHCHR has advised, assisted and supported a great number of the civil society actions and initiatives. In each regional meeting and for the majority of consultations, seminars, and events organized or supported by the Office, it has ensured that representatives of African descent civil society, including young people and women, are involved and present, by funding and supporting their participation.

51. In addition, the Office has been proactively contributing to building a global network of civil society actors active on human rights issues facing people of African descent now numbering over 1000 people through outreach, missions, participants in regional meetings and seminars, social media, and fellowship alumnae. It currently manages a mailing list to engage, communicate and consult efficiently and directly on the Decade with these representatives.

52. Furthermore, OHCHR has been coordinating the fellowship programme for people of African descent in Geneva since 2011, to help empower young people of African descent with knowledge and exposure to the UN human rights system to enhance the development of legislation, policies and programmes in their countries, as well as to undertake effective awareness-raising activities in their communities. Eighty-three fellows from 32 countries, including Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Denmark, France, Germany, Guyana, Honduras, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela have taken part in the fellowship programme. Women have comprised more than 70% of fellowship cohort. Since 2015, OHCHR has provided financial and substantive support to initiatives and projects undertaken by former fellows through International Decade for People of African Descent Grants and the OHCHR-Fellows partnership scheme. It will continue to strengthen its fellowship programme, as requested by the General Assembly the Programme of Activities.[[39]](#footnote-39)

I. Conducting research, gathering information and capacity-building

53. OHCHR, in collaboration with UNESCO, academia and civil society organisations, has undertaken substantive research in relation to the three themes of the Decade – recognition, justice and development. Some of this research has contributed to the recognition of the historical legacy of enslavement and the contributions to people of African descent to the society. Several projects have been carried out with UNESCO, such as the UNESCO-OHCHR academic publication on enslavement in Latin America and the Caribbean, the blog about the cultural heritage of people of African descent, and the publication “Slavery, Resistance and Abolitions: A Plural Perspective”.

54. Research has been conducted by OHCHR on a number of relevant thematic issues including on access to justice, racial profiling, data collection and indicators, racial stereotyping, women and girls of African descent, multiple and aggravated discrimination, incitement to racial hatred/hate speech, slavery and the slave trade, and the right to development. Numerous briefings and trainings about the Decade and its thematic content have also been undertaken to build the capacity of States, UN system, civil society and other partners.

55. As requested in the Programme of Activities, the Office has included an online section in the anti-discrimination database on the International Decade for People of African Descent,[[40]](#footnote-40) which is updated regularly with information and documentation relevant to the Programme of Activities.[[41]](#footnote-41)

J. Communications and raising awareness about the Decade

56. Since the start of the Decade, OHCHR has been working closely with the UN Department of Global Communications (DGC), on awareness-raising and promotional materials on the Decade,[[42]](#footnote-42) including by updating the official DGC website on the Decade.[[43]](#footnote-43)

57. The Office has produced a number of publications, including a bound Decade notebook with USB key, and printed materials on “Women and Girls of African descent”,[[44]](#footnote-44); “Slavery, Resistance and Abolitions: A Plural Perspective”, “WGEPAD on African descent”; the limited edition leather bound “An agenda for 10 years: History, Memory and Heritage”; and several posters and postcards. These publications are generally available in English, French and Spanish, and have been distributed widely through our field offices and at OHCHR events.

58. The Office has also produced a CD-ROM with a compilation of documentation related to the International Decade for People of African descent, audio-visual materials, training materials, and is stepping up its social media presence about the Decade.

K. Accountability and reparatory justice

59. In the human rights framework, justice and accountability are vital elements of reparation and alleviating harm. Moreover, reparatory justice has been part of the thinking and dialogue in the international community in respect of people of African descent particularly since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which stated that slavery, the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade were among the sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.[[45]](#footnote-45)

60. Under the justice theme of the Decade’s Programme of Activities, States should take further measures to ensure justice and honour the memory of the victims of these tragedies. This includes, inter alia, acknowledging the untold suffering and evils inflicted on millions of men, women and children, as a result of slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, genocide and past tragedies. It is noteworthy that some States have taken the initiative to apologize and have paid reparation, where appropriate, for grave and massive violations committed. Truth telling processes in addition to such steps are essential. States that have not yet taken comprehensive steps towards justice, reconciliation and healing are called upon to do so in order to find some ways to contribute to the restoration of human dignity of victims. In that vein, all States concerned are called upon to take appropriate and effective measures to halt and reverse the lasting consequences of those practices, bearing in mind their moral obligations. The international community and its members are invited to honour the memory of the victims of these tragedies with a view to closing those dark chapters in history and as a means of reconciliation and healing. [[46]](#footnote-46)

61. In the years since the adoption of the Decade, there has been a slowly growing general acceptance about the timeliness of considering issues of reparations and reparatory justice. There are discussions and exchanges of views in African descent communities in many countries and in the general public, as well as emerging national and public discourse on the issue of reparations and people of African descent.

62. Additionally, regional organizations, such as the African Union, and the CARICOM Reparations Commission have been studying and making proposals about reparatory justice for slavery, slave trade and enslavement of people of African descent. The European Parliament adopted on 26 March 2019 for the first time adopted a resolution on the Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent, which states that the phenomenon of “Afrophobia”, “Afri-phobia” and “anti-black racism” correlates to historically repressive structures of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, as recognised by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. Furthermore, the European Parliament said the issues of enslavement, forced labour, racial apartheid, massacre, and genocides in the context of European colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade remain largely unrecognized and unaccounted at an institutional level in EU Member States.[[47]](#footnote-47)

63. In her aforementioned statement during the “Urgent Debate” at the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner noted that: “[b]ehind today’s racial violence, systemic racism, and discriminatory policing lies the failure to acknowledge and confront the legacy of the slave trade and colonialism. To build a more solid foundation for equality we need to better understand the scope of systemic discrimination, with disaggregated data by ethnicity or race. We also need to make amends for centuries of violence and discrimination, including through formal apologies, truth-telling processes, and reparations in various forms.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

64. Truth-telling processes and dialogues, at the national level, and broader regional and international initiatives, are an important step towards eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, against people of African Descent. While justice is not a perfect enterprise, truth and reconciliation can go some way towards reparatory justice. It is noteworthy that the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia also references truth telling and in her most recent report on reparations.[[49]](#footnote-49) OHCHR has expertise in the area of transitional justice and stands ready to assist in convening such discussions and dialogue.

L. The Forum on People of African Descent

65. Since the adoption of the Programme of Activities, a Forum on People of African Descenthas been envisaged to serve as a consultation mechanism among Member States, civil society, the United Nations and all other stakeholders, during the International Decade.

66. Between 2015 and 2018, successive resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly articulated some of the modalities of the Permanent Forum.[[50]](#footnote-50) On 10 May 2019, OHCHR organized with the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica in Geneva a one-day consultation[[51]](#footnote-51) on the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent with over 200 participants, including representatives from governments, UN mechanisms, bodies and specialised agencies, civil society and people of African descent from all regions. For the first time, several civil society coalitions representing hundreds of non-governmental organizations from Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean engaged in extensive prior consultations and drafted concrete proposals, signifying a very good level of interest and shared aspirations of people of African descent for the Forum.[[52]](#footnote-52) The General Assembly has recently welcomed the constructive discussions held in Geneva on the modalities of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, and decided to define them at its seventy-fourth session.[[53]](#footnote-53)

67. A crucial achievement at this mid-term point of the Decade would be the adoption of a Forum on People of African descent to move forward in implementing the Programme of Activities of the Decade. Both in public statements and in discussions with delegations, the High Commissioner has been encouraging Member States to accelerate their consideration of, and negotiations on, the Forum.

IV Further necessary actions

68. In view of the foregoing, at the mid-term of the International Decade, further necessary actions are urgently needed by States and all other stakeholders on a number of fronts. There has been some progress in implementation, and OHCHR has played an important coordination and implementation role, as outlined above. However, implementation of the Programme of Activities of the Decade must accelerate and keep apace with demands for justice, recognition and development, which are currently taking place around the world.

69. The following recommendations are made to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Activities of the International Decade for people of African descent in every region, by States, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholders.

1. Increase State engagement and actions

70. States should accelerate actions at every level to implement the various parts of the Programme of Actives for People of African descent domestically. Specific national action plans and policies and the establishment or reform of institutions to improve the lives people of African descent and to include them in decision-making and public organizations are recommended.

71. Launching the Decade is a symbolic and essential activity of the Programme of Activities. States should recognize and launch the Decade, as soon as possible.

72. States should enhance their efforts in the collection of disaggregated data and information about the situation of people of African descent, which will contribute greatly to the formulation of targeted policies, programmes and initiatives.

73. States should also increase their cooperation to move forward on the Forum on People of African Descent and the Draft Declaration on People of African Descent and use the 20th anniversary of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance next year, as an opportunity to renew their political commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and in this context, revitalize their actions to implement the Programme of Activities of the International Decade for people of African descent.

2. Communicate better and digitally about the Decade

74. The most recent General Assembly resolution requests OHCHR and the Department of Global Communications to continue awareness-raising efforts and public information campaigns in support of the International Decade for People of African Descent through the use of social networks and digital media, including the wide distribution of user-friendly, concise and accessible versions of material.[[54]](#footnote-54) Increased efforts will also be needed to establish an awareness raising campaign on the Decade as specifically requested by the Programme of Activities[[55]](#footnote-55) to inform the general public of the history, contributions, including to global development, challenges, contemporary experiences and situation of human rights of people of African descent.

75. Going forward, the Decade must have significant digital profile and reach. An increased digital presence will help raise awareness about the Decade, and the many important themes and activities which should be implemented and which are already taking place around the world in various sectors, and in many countries.

76. It has yet to be exploited to full potential how digital technology can assist with informing, raising awareness and building capacity, fostering commitment and actions around the Decade’s themes of recognition, justice and development. This can be achieved through supporting the creativity, ideas and networks of young people.

77. OHCHR with the UN Department of Global Communications, will work on a revamped global communications strategy on the Decade, and the Decade must go digital.

3. Consult and collaborate with people of African descent, including through youth engagement

78. The process of implementing the Decade is crucial to the implementation of the activities themselves. It is important that States assist the participation of civil society in the meetings, consultations and activities under the Decade, whether nationally, regionally or internationally, and States, regional organizations and other stakeholders are specifically called upon to facilitate the participation of civil society from their respective countries and regions.[[56]](#footnote-56)

79. Moreover, all stakeholders should support and create the civic space for young people to connect, contribute and reach out to their peers around the world about the Decade.

80. The Programme of Activities is clear in that it “urge[s] States to ensure that activities and objectives of the that activities and objectives for the Decade are planned and implemented in accordance with paragraph 10 of the programme of activities for the implementation of the Decade on the basis of full consultation and collaboration with people of African descent.”[[57]](#footnote-57) It will be important that civil society be more consciously and meaningfully involved in implementing the Decade. It is imperative that young people and women be involved and consulted on all activities of the Decade going forward.

4. Discuss accountability and reparatory justice

81. The international community is increasingly acknowledging the historical linkages between slavery, the slave trade and the transatlantic slave trade and racial discrimination against people of African descent. Formal apologies, truth-telling processes, and reparations are some means to acknowledge and address these manifestations today. If requested, OHCHR stands ready, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders including African descent civil society, to support such discussions and dialogue on accountability and reparatory justice in respect of issues relating to people of African descent, as a step towards eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, against them.

5. Establish the Forum on people of African descent

82. As the Coordinator of the Decade, the High Commissioner is of the view that a Forum on People of African descent would serve as a critical consultation mechanism for people of African descent on issues affecting their human rights. The Forum should feature a platform enabling a vital voice for people of African descent on the key thematic issues, which directly affect them, including, but not limited to the implementation of the activities of the Decade for People of African descent. A Forum would accelerate the gains of the movement for people of African descent to date and add a focal point to the actions to improve the human rights of people of African descent.

83. The discussions on the Forum have been delayed by a lack of agreement about the Forum modalities as well as by the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the holding of inter-governmental meetings.

84. Nevertheless, States, with input from African descent civil society, should move ahead to agree on the modalities and establish the Forum, and OHCHR will provide the Forum with the technical and secretariat support that it requires. In this regard, States should also ensure that the Forum is sufficiently funded and staffed.

6. Negotiate the Draft Declaration on people of African descent

85. Preliminary discussions on the Draft Declaration on people of African descent have been taking place, and regional meetings in Brasilia, Geneva and Dakar considered the Draft Declaration, its objectives and what substantively, at least on a preliminary basis, it might contain. Taken with inputs and submissions from African descent civil society, the discussions at these regional meetings should also feed into the negotiations on the Draft Declaration on the promotion and full respect of human rights of people of African descent.

86. The Declaration should be a key outcome of the International Decade for people of African descent authoritatively defining the current and possibly future state of affairs in relation to people of African descent. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that people of African descent require a focused consideration of their human rights to ensure that gaps in the full protection and promotion of their human rights are addressed. A declaration would consider economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights and certain areas such as access to justice and law enforcement. The High Commissioner strongly encourages accelerated work on negotiating this Declaration, with an inclusive approach, and the meaningful consultation and participation of people of African descent from around the world.

7. Fund the Decade

87. In proclaiming the Decade, the General Assembly called for the allocation of predictable funding from the regular budget and extra budgetary resources of the United Nations for the effective implementation of the programme of action and activities under the International Decade.[[58]](#footnote-58)

88. While the regular budget funding supports some core work of the Decade, including the regional meetings and the fellowship for people of African descent, it is insufficient to accelerate the needed progress on implementing the programme of activities of the Decade. While acknowledging the current difficult financial environment, given the importance of the issues of the Decade, greater funding support to its activities is required, both at the national and at the international levels.

89. There should be specific funds allocated for significant youth participation in the Decade as well as to improve the social media profile and engagement on the Decade, and funding sources from a variety of stakeholders should be considered.

90. States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, private institutions and individuals as well as other donors in a position to do so, are encouraged to contribute to the Trust Fund for the Programme for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination to support civil society participation and increased awareness-raising, in particular, and in the Forum on People of African Descent.

1. \* The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pursuant to paragraph 14 of Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/42/29. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/16 of 18 November 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A/HRC/RES/43/1 para. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A/HRC/43/1 para. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A/RES/69/16, Annex para. 9(a). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19\_and\_Racial\_Discrimination.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19\_and\_Racial\_Discrimination.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I, paras.13- 14 and 33-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. A/HRC/RES/42/29, para. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A/RES/70/1, paras. 8, 19, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. A/RES/70/1, para. 74 (g). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A/HRC/RES/69/16 Annex, para. 11 (a). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25968&LangID=E. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. A/RES/69/16, paras. 17 (b) and (c). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A/73/354. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Pursuant to para. 29 of A/RES/74/137. Broadcast live and archived at <http://webtv.un.org>. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. A/RES/68/237, preambular para. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. [A/70/339](https://undocs.org/A/70/339), [A/71/290](https://undocs.org/A/71/290), [A/72/323](https://undocs.org/A/72/323), [A/73/354](https://undocs.org/A/73/354) and [A/74/308](https://undocs.org/A/74/308). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. A/RES/69/16, para. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A/RES/69/16, para. 11(g). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2015-12-03\_declaration\_of\_the\_regional\_conference\_on\_the\_international\_decade\_of\_people\_of\_african\_descent.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/outcome\_document\_-\_regional\_meeting\_for\_europe\_central\_asia\_and\_north\_america.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/2019-africa. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2019-0212\_EN.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/CountryVisits.aspx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. A/HRC/36/60/Add.2, para 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. A/HRC/42/59/Add.1, para 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. https://en.unesco.org/internationaldecadeforpeopleofafricandescent. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-rights-inclusion/slave-route. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/UNNetworkRacialDiscriminationProtectionMinor ities.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/UNNetworkRacialDiscriminationProtectionMinor%20ities.aspx). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/past-events. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. https://afrodyssee.ch/en/sponsors-en/. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. A/RES/69/16, para. 29(*f*). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. A/RES/69/16, para. 29(g). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/promotional-materials [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/articles-publications [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/women\_and\_girls\_of\_african\_descent\_web.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I, paras.13- 14 and 33-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. A/RES/69/16, Annex para. 17 (i), (j) and (k). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Resolution: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2019-0212\_EN.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25968&LangID=E. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. A/74/321. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. A/HRC/RES/30/17, A/HRC/34/33 and A/RES/73/262. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. A/RES/73/262. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Consultation on the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent: Report of the Chair - <https://undocs.org/A/PFPAD/2019/1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. A/RES/74/137, para. 13 and 15. Discussions on the Permanent Forum have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are expected to continue during the 75th session. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. A/RES/74/137, para. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. A/RES/69/16, para. 29 (c). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. A/RES/74/137, para. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. A/RES/69/16, para. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. A/RES/68/237, para 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)