**RECOGNITION: Sharing best practices in the promotion of equality and non-discrimination**

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**Chair,**

**Excellencies and distinguished delegates,**

I am pleased to join you today to reflect on best practices for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the context of the International Decade of People of African Descent. This is an important question that also relates to the right to development. Two recent thematic studies of my Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD) address the issues of discrimination and inequality and how they impact the right to development. The first is a study on “Racism, Racial discrimination and the Right to Development.” The second is an ongoing study on “Inequality, Social Protections and the Right to Development.” Permits to recall some key findings of these studies and the good practices and recommendations that my Mechanism has identified.

In the EMRTD study on inequality and the right to development, we noted, with concern, the growing economic and social inequalities within and between states. Global challenges such as the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and conflicts, inequitable tax regimes, unfair international trade practices, and inadequate social protection systems have widened the gap between the very rich and the very poor in almost every country and region of the world.

A key result of these trends is the compounding of unequal access to resources, including health care, food, safe drinking water, housing, income, and overall safety and general well-being. These conditions foster environments of hostility, particularly towards the poor, the vulnerable, and minority groups. As instability and insecurity grow between and within states as well as individuals, it is essential that governments and stakeholders take resolute steps to counter and prevent ongoing and potential sources of inequality. States and other stakeholders also have a responsibility to take active steps to reduce social inequities as well as inequalities in resource distribution and access to economic opportunities.

Equality, including the right to freedom from discrimination, is at the core of the human rights framework and is present in all human rights instruments. This principle is enshrined both in foundational documents such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the more recent covenants such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Specifically, in relation to the right to development, the Declaration on the Right to Development affirms the principle of non-discrimination and the *equality of opportunity for development*.

How can States, the international community and civil society address growing inequality and the persistence of discriminatory practices along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and other social identifiers?

Chair, distinguished delegates, since this session is focused on sharing “best practices,” I will focus my remarks on some of the *good practices* for addressing inequality and discrimination that the EMRTD has identified in its studies. I hesitate to call them “best practices” because our studies did not find many practices that fully addressed the problem of inequality and discrimination from structural and systematic standpoints. Addressing inequality and discrimination at their roots requires structural changes to the political, social, and economic systems of states and societies to account for historical inequities and contemporary exclusions. We found few practices aimed at effecting these kinds of structural societal changes. What we found are, therefore, not necessarily *best practices* but *good practices* that make some improvement in the status quo.

In our studies on discrimination and inequality, the EMRTD noted that although challenges remain, renewed calls for gender equity and the racial justice movement have prompted some States and regional bodies to take steps to address longstanding gender and racial equity gaps. These steps include enacting laws, policies and other pragmatic interventions that address racism in the context of operationalizing the right to development for enhanced implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our studies found that in some cases, non-discrimination has been integrated into the formal education and training of officials working in public institutions, including those involved in operationalizing national development agendas. Several States have introduced measures to hold public institutions and private organizations accountable for racial discrimination in key sectors related to the right to development, such as employment, housing, health, and education.

State responses to the questionnaire for the EMRTD study on racism and the right to development showed that some States and regional organizations have other taken proactive steps to address racial discrimination in the broad context of national development. Such measures include national anti-racism agendas and anti-discrimination action plans. These agendas and action plans can help to address racial discrimination as an obstacle to fulfilling the right to development. However, such measures and interventions must be continually assessed and re-evaluated to ensure they meet the goal of combating systemic social and economic discrimination.

On access to *health*, a good practice for States is to take proactive, targeted measures to protect vulnerable individuals and communities. On *housing,* one good practice is for States to prioritize providing safe, affordable, and stable housing to the most vulnerable communities recognizing that housing is key to accessing the enjoyment of other rights. Governments, civil society organizations and relevant international organizations should conduct regular, fair housing audits and ensure non-discriminatory renting and buying policies. This should be accompanied by State-led targeted aid in acquiring housing for vulnerable racialized individuals and groups through investment, funding and rent control measures and the building of initiatives.

On *employment and work opportunities*, States can address inequality and discrimination in access to employment through special measures such as affirmative action or other targeted policies and programmes to fulfil the right to development and meet the Sustainable Development Goals. States and other stakeholders should institute and sustain processes to promote diversity and sensitivity training in the workplace.

On *education,* states can address inequality and discrimination by instituting and sustaining mechanisms to eliminate gender, racial, ethnic, religious and other disparities in education, ensure equitable and inclusive quality education, and promote learning opportunities for all. It is important that policies aimed at bridging the education divide should be linked with employment interventions.

On *policing and justice*, States can address inequality and discrimination by taking proactive steps to include human rights and cultural sensitivity training for law enforcement personnel and ensuring justice and accountability in cases of discrimination. Proportional representation of minorities and marginalized communities should be sought out and encouraged by States within policing agencies, administration and court systems through recruitment initiatives and ongoing and inclusive policy re-evaluations.

To address *poverty and growing economic inequalities*, States should establish and sustain effective universal social protection systems. These social protection systems must be constructed within a nationally defined system of policies and programming that take into consideration the right of all to “life, liberty and security of person.”. Governments and policymakers should craft programs and policies that guarantee a basic level of income security, install social protection floors, and expand access to essential health care for all.

The problem of inequality and discrimination is not only a domestic problem of states. It is also a collective problem of the international community. Therefore, international cooperation is essential to addressing these problems. States should make non-discrimination, inclusive participation, and equality of opportunity for development cardinal principles in fulfilling their *duty to cooperate* to promote international development. International cooperation and partnership for development should centre on principles of *equality and non-discrimination* aimed at promoting and strengthening universal respect for human rights for all without distinction as to race, gender, nationalism, language, or religion.

Thank you for your attention.