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**United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**

**32nd Session 1- 5 May 2023**

**“Economic empowerment of people of African descent”**

**Statement by Mohamed Ezzeldine Abdel-Moneim,**

**Chair, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

**3 May 2023**

**Thematic Discussion**

**Topic 4: The Impact of the Global Financial Architecture and Mechanisms  
on People of African Descent**

Chairperson,  
Distinguished experts,

Thank you for the invitation to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which I have the privilege of chairing.

Today, I would like to use the minutes available to provide information on the work of the Committee, as it relates to the topic discussed throughout the week.

The Committee has regularly focused on persons and groups which are disadvantaged and marginalized, throughout its work. It is most often these who also experience various forms of discrimination, formal or substantive, which also affects the enjoyment of a full range of rights, and deepens inequalities.

The Committee has consistently emphasized the importance of identifying and prioritizing the needs of those individuals and groups that are disadvantaged and marginalised and vulnerable to systemic and intersectional forms of discrimination.

I would like to recall that this year we commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the VDMA. We cannot dissociate this discussion on economic empowerment from the overall enjoyment of all human rights.

Turning to the focus of the Working Group, the Committee has in many instances specifically sought information about – or flagged concerns regarding - the situation of Afro descendants. It is also through this lens that we would view economic empowerment.

In the lists of issues addressed to States, as the Committee seeks additional information on implementation of the Covenant, it regularly requests disaggregated data which includes specific requests for information on Afro-descendants in particular in a number of instances.

Whether it is related to poverty levels, the impact of development projects, unemployment rates or overrepresentation in low-paid jobs; attainment in education, or access to the internet – it is only by analysis of the data which is disaggregated that the situation of particularly disadvantaged individuals or groups, including those of African Descent, becomes visible. We have also noted that, in times of crisis or emergency situations, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, or in situations of conflict, persons of African Descent have been among those disproportionately affected. In certain situations, we have also particularly focused, for example, on women, on leaders/human rights defenders or on refugees of African Descent. By identifying these persons or

groups, it becomes possible to design and reach out with specific targeted measures to mitigate the negative impact of those situations - on those most or disproportionately affected. I would like to underline that the Covenant requires State parties to protect and realize the rights of those left behind by poverty, socio economic and cultural exclusion and marginalization.

A quick review of our work focusing on State party reports reveals that, while the Committee seeks information related to persons of African Descent from States parties in various regions, concerns and recommendations made by the Committee have been addressed for the most part to States in Latin and South America. We have found that, in various States, populations of African Descent experience higher levels of poverty, are overrepresented in rural and remote areas, experience higher levels of unemployment, which often also impacts social security, lower level of educational attainment, all of which has an impact on their economic empowerment. Economic empowerment of persons of African descent will in turn also contribute to addressing the inequalities observed, reducing poverty and contributing to inclusive growth. It is thus necessary to address the underlying causes of discrimination, which perpetuate the situation of vulnerability and marginalisation.

Before closing, I would like to use the opportunity flag the [Statement](#) of the Committee on *the Pledge to Leave No One Behind: the Covenant and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. I believe that it is very relevant to the discussion this week. It highlights that the rights protected under the Covenant underpin the Sustainable Development Goals. The Statement also outlines key elements of a rights-based methodology which the Committee believes can very usefully guide States including with respect to addressing the situation of persons of African Descent. I'd like to add that the Committee is currently working on a general comment on sustainable development and ICESCR and we hope that it will further contribute to realizing the pledge to Leave No One Behind, and ensuring just, inclusive, and sustainable societies, for present and future generations - including persons of African Descent. The contribution of the Working Group will be most welcome as we work on the draft in the coming year.

In closing, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to highlight the work of the Committee during this meeting and I look forward to further engagement as we seek to mutually reinforce our common efforts to ensure enjoyment of all human rights for persons of African Descent.

Thank you.