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**Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia
and related intolerance: comprehensive implementation of
and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme
of Action**

Programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report presents an assessment of progress made in implementing the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) at its midterm. The report concludes with recommendations on further necessary actions to promote the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights of people of African descent and accelerate the implementation of the programme of activities for the remainder of the Decade.

* [A/76/150](#).

** The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution [69/16](#), by which the Assembly adopted a programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent. It provides an overview and assessment of progress made to implement the programme of activities of the Decade during its first half. The report is based on information from States, national human rights institutions, human rights mechanisms, United Nations entities, regional organizations and civil society organizations,¹ as well as information and analysis from the previous reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme of activities.²

II. International developments relevant to the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent

A. Midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent

2. On 22 July 2021, the President of the General Assembly convened a midterm review of the International Decade.³ The event provided a platform to take stock of the steps taken until then and the way forward to implement the activities of the Decade. On 23 July 2021, the Department of Global Communications, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) marked the midterm of the Decade by organizing and broadcasting a side event entitled “See us, hear us, count us in: voices from the Decade for People of African Descent”.⁴ In both events, calls were made to accelerate the pace of the implementation of the Decade.

B. Establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent

3. On 2 August 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution [75/314](#) establishing the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent “as a consultative mechanism for people of African descent and other relevant stakeholders as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent, as well as an advisory body to the Human Rights Council”. In the resolution, the Assembly defined the modalities, format and substantive and procedural aspects of the Forum, the creation of which had first been envisaged in the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade.⁵ The establishment of the Forum represents a crucial achievement of the Decade.

¹ OHCHR circulated notes verbales to States (on 19 April 2021), national human rights institutions and civil society organizations (on 27 April 2021) and a message to United Nations entities through the United Nations network on racial discrimination and the protection of minorities (on 27 April 2021), requesting information for the report. As at 30 June 2021, seven States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Iraq, Mauritius, Peru, Spain and Tunisia), five national human rights institutions (from Chile, Liberia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay), seven civil society organizations and two United Nations entities (UNFPA and the World Health Organization (WHO)) had sent specific contributions.

² [A/75/363](#), [A/74/308](#), [A/73/354](#), [A/72/323](#), [A/71/290](#) and [A/70/339](#).

³ Broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>.

⁴ See <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k14/k14kkfmsy0>.

⁵ Resolution [69/16](#), annex, para. 29 (i).

C. Twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

4. The year 2021 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which recognized that people of African descent continued to be victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as a consequence of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism.⁶

5. At its special meeting held in February 2021 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Economic and Social Council addressed, inter alia, the need for dedicated actions to ensure equality and improve the economic situation for people of African descent and other disadvantaged groups.⁷ During its forty-sixth session, in February and March 2021, the Human Rights Council held a high-level panel discussion to mark the anniversary.⁸ In September 2021, the General Assembly will also hold a high-level meeting on the theme “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent” to commemorate the anniversary.

D. Impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on people of African descent

6. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had a disproportionate impact not only on the health of people of African descent, but also on their economic and social situation, exposing the strong social and economic dimensions of racism and racial discrimination. The World Health Organization (WHO) noted that the threat and experience of COVID-19 was different for different groups and that the world’s most marginalized and stigmatized required additional attention in the response to the pandemic.⁹ A United Nations policy brief on COVID-19 and human rights also underlined the vulnerability of racial, ethnic and religious minorities to higher rates of infection and mortality, harsh treatment by law enforcement in the context of emergency measures and unequal access to adequate medical care.¹⁰ According to OHCHR, there had also been a significant increase in racial verbal abuse, harassment and violence in public spaces in the months following the start of the pandemic.¹¹

E. Systemic racism, in particular by law enforcement

7. The killing of George Floyd, an African American man, in the United States of America in late May 2020 sparked a global movement against systemic racism and violence by law enforcement. This has amplified the voices denouncing the dangers of racism. Global protests drew attention to the pervasive racial discrimination experienced by people of African descent in many countries around the world.

⁶ Durban Declaration, paras. 13, 14 and 34.

⁷ Available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org/ecosoc/files/files/en/president/2021/presidential-statement-18-february-2021.pdf>.

⁸ A/HRC/47/59.

⁹ WHO, “Addressing human rights as key to the COVID-19: response”, available at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/addressing-human-rights-as-key-to-the-covid-19-response>.

¹⁰ United Nations, “COVID-19 and human rights – we are all in this together”, April 2020, p. 11, available at https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_human_rights_and_covid_23_april_2020.pdf.

¹¹ OHCHR, “Racial discrimination in the context of the COVID-19 crisis”, p. 1, available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf.

8. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/1, adopted following the Council's June 2020 urgent debate on current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protests, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights presented on 12 July 2021 her report on the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive the use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers.¹² In the report, she proposed a four-point agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality.¹³ The agenda is aimed at: reversing cultures of denial, dismantling systemic racism and accelerating the pace of action; ending impunity for human rights violations by law enforcement officials and closing the trust deficits; ensuring that the voices of people of African descent and those who stand up against racism are heard and that their concerns are acted upon; and acknowledging and confronting legacies, including through accountability and redress.¹⁴ This agenda is complementary to the programme of the Decade and will assist States and stakeholders in addressing systemic racism in law enforcement against people of African descent.

9. The Human Rights Council took note with appreciation of the report, including the agenda, and called on OHCHR to enhance and broaden its monitoring, take further action globally towards this agenda, and provide support and strengthen its assistance to States and other stakeholders, particularly people of African descent and their organizations.¹⁵ It also established an international independent expert mechanism to further the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement globally, especially where relating to the legacies of colonialism and the Transatlantic slave trade in enslaved Africans, and to contribute to accountability and redress for victims.¹⁶

III. Implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent

10. The present section presents an assessment of progress made on the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade since its launch in 2015. It follows the structure established by the programme and the themes of the Decade. It includes examples received through the different inputs; information and analysis from previous annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme of activities were also taken into account.

A. Recognition

1. Right to equality and non-discrimination

11. In line with the programme of activities of the Decade, some States modified their constitutions to include people of African descent. For example, in a constitutional reform passed in 2015, Costa Rica declared itself a multi-ethnic and multicultural republic. In 2019, Mexico amended its Constitution to explicitly recognize the rights of Afro-Mexican peoples.

¹² A/HRC/47/53, to be read in conjunction with conference room paper 1, available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/A_HRC_47_CRP_1.pdf.

¹³ Ibid., annex.

¹⁴ Ibid., summary.

¹⁵ Human Rights Council resolution 47/21, para. 14.

¹⁶ Ibid., para. 10.

12. Since the launch of the Decade, a number of States have also adopted specific legislation or policies to tackle racial discrimination. In 2015, Peru adopted a decree proclaiming that attention to the human rights of Afro-Peruvians was of national interest and calling on all sectors of Government to formulate and implement programmes, projects and actions aimed at strengthening the rights of the Afro-Peruvian population. In 2016, Ecuador adopted a decree by which the programme of activities for the Decade was made a national policy.¹⁷ In 2018, Tunisia adopted an organic law on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. In 2019, Chile approved law 21.151 granting legal recognition to the Chilean Afrodescendent tribal people. In 2020, Costa Rica approved a law against violence and racism in sport.

13. The criminal codes of a number of countries prohibit and sanction discriminatory acts based on race and ethnic origin, among other grounds. In Costa Rica, a draft bill is under discussion to amend the criminal code so that the killing of a person for their race or ethnicity, among other characteristics or statuses, would be classified as qualified homicide.

14. States, in their submissions, reported that they have established new institutions to lead, coordinate or contribute to efforts to combat racism and racial discrimination. In 2015, Costa Rica established the position of Presidential Commissioner for Afrodescendent Affairs to articulate public policies involving people of African descent. Costa Rica is also working on the creation of a national council for people of African descent. In 2018, Uruguay adopted a law creating a national council on racial equality and Afrodescendency. In 2021, Tunisia adopted a regulatory decree establishing the modalities, attributions, organization, operation and composition of the national commission to combat racial discrimination. The commission will collect data and design and propose public policies to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

15. Some States have also developed policies and national action plans for people of African descent and against racial discrimination. In December 2014, Costa Rica adopted a national action plan for people of African descent for 2015–2018 and is finalizing a second action plan to implement the national policy against racism, xenophobia and racial discrimination. In 2016, Peru launched a national development plan for the Afro-Peruvian population for 2016–2020, establishing specific measures to guarantee, *inter alia*, the statistical visibility, right to equality and non-discrimination, and the social, political, economic and cultural inclusion of Afro-Peruvians. A national policy on Afro-Peruvian people is being elaborated. In Ecuador, the National Council for the Equality of Peoples and Nationalities further formulated policy frameworks to promote the rights of people of African descent, including the Equality Agenda for the Decade for People of African Descent (2016).¹⁸ In Argentina, the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2017–2020 outlined specific actions to be carried out to make visible the Afrodescendent community under the Decade.¹⁹

16. In 2017, Sweden adopted a national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. In 2018, Uruguay developed a national plan on racial equality and Afrodescendency, which is further articulated in the national strategy on public policies for the Afro-Uruguayans and Afrodescendent population (2018–2030). Nicaragua adopted a strategy of human development for the Caribbean coast (2019–2029).

¹⁷ [A/HRC/45/44/Add.1](#), para. 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 22.

¹⁹ [A/HRC/42/59/Add.2](#), para. 16.

to guide public policies for the effective participation of Afrodescendent and other communities in development processes.

17. Some States have made progress on the adoption of national legal and policy frameworks recognizing the rights of people of African descent and prohibiting discrimination based on race and ethnic origin. However, progress has been much slower concerning the development and enforcement of concrete and effective measures that are essential to implement these frameworks. Financial and human resources and a lack of political will often constitute the main challenges for the realization of laws, policies and plans against racial discrimination and for the good functioning of the institutions created or designated to lead this work.

2. Education on equality and awareness-raising

18. A number of States organized campaigns and other types of activities to raise public awareness about equality and the rights of people of African descent. These different initiatives often offered platforms for Afrodescendent people to share their lived experiences and generate dialogue and solutions.

19. As requested in the programme of activities,²⁰ the Decade was officially launched in a number of countries, including Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Guatemala, Jamaica, the Netherlands and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Some States also commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition. In March 2021, Tunisia organized the first anti-racism week to commemorate both International Days. In March 2021, OHCHR and the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the Iraqi Office of the Prime Minister's Adviser and the Racial Discrimination Commissioner of the High Commission for Human Rights co-facilitated an event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination featuring four short films by young Iraqi film-makers, one of which focused on the protection of children of African descent.

20. Some States are dedicating specific days or months to recognize people of African descent and their culture, history and heritage. In 2014, Peru declared June the month for Afro-Peruvian culture to encourage the visibility and recognition of the contributions of Afro-Peruvians to the construction of the country. In 2016, Costa Rica declared August the month of people of African descent to promote knowledge of the history of the Afrodescendent population. In 2019, Tunisia proclaimed 23 January as national slavery abolition day. In Ecuador, the National Assembly declared 2 October as the national day of Afro-Ecuadorians.²¹

21. In 2018, Peru recognized the district of San Luis as a living repository of collective historical and artistic memory of Afro-Peruvians in the country. The authorities also promoted the recognition of the district of Zaña as a site for the memory of slavery and African cultural heritage, joining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Slave Route Project. In Ecuador, the Government has taken actions to promote greater knowledge and respect for the heritage and culture of Afro-Ecuadorians, including the repositories of memories of Afro-Ecuadorian society in Esmeraldas and Quito, artistic events, conferences, book launches, forums and exhibitions.²²

22. Many States also launched public campaigns and organized cultural activities to promote the visibility of people of African descent and their diverse heritage, culture

²⁰ Resolution 69/16, annex, para. 12 (a).

²¹ A/HRC/45/44/Add.1, para. 30.

²² Ibid.

and contributions. In 2015, the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico launched a travelling photo exhibition on Afrodescendants from the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. In 2017, the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico launched the book “Afromexicanos, pertenencia y orgullo”, which reflected the vulnerability and traditions of the Afro-Mexican population and highlighted their potential, cultural richness and the challenges they faced. The book was presented in many local and international venues, including museums and universities. The Commission also organizes an annual training programme on the human rights of indigenous and Afrodescendent peoples.

23. Civil society organizations have also organized numerous education and awareness-raising activities on the rights of people of African descent and the Decade, including rallies, discussions on reparations, and projections of documentaries. The International Decade for People of African Descent Coalition of the United Kingdom has been raising awareness of the Decade in the United Kingdom through discussions and online forums and via social media platforms. In March 2019, the European Network of Women of African Descent organized a conference in Barcelona to raise awareness about Afrophobia in Spain.

24. The numerous awareness-raising activities undertaken by different stakeholders, including Governments, independent institutions and civil society and grass-roots organizations, are welcome and play an important part in the implementation of the programme of activities. However, awareness-raising activities often face sustainability issues over time, and therefore States should ensure they are planned as part of broader strategies and allocated the necessary resources.

3. Information-gathering and data collection

25. The collection and analysis of disaggregated data on the human rights situation of people of African descent is essential to better understand and combat structural racism and to design, adopt and implement targeted legislation, public policies and strategies. This is reflected in the programme of activities of the Decade, which requires States to collect, compile, analyse, disseminate and publish reliable statistical data and take all other related measures necessary to assess regularly the situation of people of African descent.²³ The programme of activities also underscores that the collection of disaggregated information should uphold the right to privacy and the principle of self-identification. It is also essential to ensure data protection and not to use information gathered for other purposes, such as surveillance.²⁴

26. Peru reported that it had included questions on ethnic self-identification for the first time in the population and housing censuses of 2017. Based on the information obtained through these censuses, the authorities are updating a map of the Afro-Peruvian population. Law 21.151 adopted in 2019 and granting legal recognition to the Afrodescendent tribal people of Chile stipulates that the State must include the Chilean Afrodescendent tribal people in population censuses. Spain opened a dialogue with civil society on the suitability of collecting data on ethnic origin through statistics, studies or surveys to identify and work on eliminating racial discrimination, including that suffered by Africans and people of African descent.

27. In Uruguay, UNFPA supported the collection of information on social inequalities faced by the Afro-Uruguayan population to provide key inputs for public policies, in particular on sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence. In March 2021, Spain published a study entitled “Examination of the African and

²³ See also CERD/C/GC/34.

²⁴ See also OHCHR, “A human rights approach to data disaggregation to leave no one behind”, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/DataDisaggregation.pdf>.

Afrodescendent population in Spain – identity and access to rights”. The study was based on the results of a survey filled out by Africans, people of African descent and associations. In Costa Rica, the Office of the Presidential Commissioner for Afrodescendent Affairs is leading the development of an analysis of the situation of Afrodescendent productive and business activities, as well as a directory of those businesses.

28. Despite some progress, the lack of reliable and up-to-date data and information on people of African descent remains a major challenge in many States. Surveys, consultations and the inclusion of specific questions in other information-gathering instruments are all essential to identifying the main obstacles faced by people of African descent and designing and implementing effective measures to address them. The collection of data disaggregated by race and ethnic origin, as well as, *inter alia*, gender, age, disability and migration status, is also important in order to identify the multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination faced by people of African descent and to recognize the specific experiences of women of African descent and other groups who face compounded discrimination.

4. Participation and inclusion

29. The full, equal and effective participation of people of African descent in public and political affairs is integral to implementing the programme of activities of the Decade.²⁵ In 2016, Peru established a registry of Afro-Peruvian organizations. In consultation with people of African descent, in 2016 the Peruvian authorities adopted a ministerial resolution establishing a working group for the Afro-Peruvian population in order to coordinate, propose and follow up on public policies involving the Afro-descendent population and/or requiring an intercultural focus. The Working Group elects its members every two years from Afro-Peruvian organizations, ensuring the representation of youth and a gender balance.

30. In 2020, a woman of African descent was appointed Director General for Equality of Treatment and Ethnic-Racial Diversity of the Spanish Ministry of Equality, becoming the first woman of African descent to hold a senior public administration position. In 2020, an Afro-Tunisian man was appointed Minister of Youth, Sports and Professional Integration of Tunisia. Nicaragua has been promoting the representation of people of African descent in all branches of the State; to date, people of African descent have been elected or appointed to the Supreme Electoral Council, the National Assembly and high-ranking governmental positions at the national, regional and local levels.

31. Thanks to education campaigns and other actions, Nicaragua reported that it had increased the participation of Afrodescendent people in regional electoral processes from 38 per cent in 2002 to 55 per cent in 2019. In Iraq, OHCHR and the UNAMI Human Rights Office organized in April 2021, together with activists of African descent, a meeting to assess challenges and identify potential solutions for candidates and voters from minorities in the region of Basra. Chile is considering ways to facilitate the participation of Afrodescendent people during the preparation, execution and diffusion of the 2022 census on population and housing.

32. In 2019, the Senate of Mexico convened free, prior and informed consultations of Afro-Mexican communities on the project of amendment of the Constitution to include the recognition of Afro-Mexicans. In Colombia, for the past few years OHCHR has been advising and accompanying the process of prior consultation on the statute of the Raizal people, which seeks to guarantee the effective recognition and respect of their collective land rights and right to self-determination.

²⁵ Resolution 69/16, annex, para. 16.

33. For the past few years, OHCHR Colombia facilitated dialogue between indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples and government institutions at the national and regional level to formulate strategies to ensure their physical and cultural integrity. As a result, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Culture and departmental governments included actions to ensure the recognition of ethnic peoples as collectives entitled to special protection and territorial rights and participation in accordance with International Labour Organization Convention No. 169. In Chile, Law 21.151 of 2019 established the right of Chilean people of the Afrodescendent tribal people of Chile to be consulted on legislative or administrative measures which could affect them.

34. In Uruguay, UNFPA supported the participation of young Afrodescendants in coordination with other youth networks in the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights and the prevention of gender violence. In 2019, the National Human Rights Institution of Uruguay prepared a report entitled “Afro-descendants: norms to promote participation in the areas of education and employment”, which established affirmative actions to increase the representation of people of African descent in public service positions and their participation in education.

B. Justice

35. The programme of activities for the implementation of the Decade requires States to take measures to ensure Afrodescendent people’s equality before the law, their full access to effective protection and remedies, and their right to a fair trial; to eliminate racial profiling and institutionalized stereotypes in law enforcement; and to facilitate access to justice for victims of racism. States are encouraged to adopt special measures, such as affirmative action, to alleviate and remedy disparities in the enjoyment of human rights affecting people of African descent.²⁶

36. Since a 2014 census of the judicial branch in Brazil revealed that 82.8 per cent of judges self-identified as white, in 2015, the National Justice Council adopted a resolution assigning at least 20 per cent of vacancies in the judiciary to Afrodescendent candidates, in accordance with the Racial Equality Statute of 2010 and a federal law of 2014. In 2016, Costa Rica implemented a project of sensitization of the judiciary on the situation of people of African descent, which led to the adoption and implementation of a national policy of the judiciary on the issue. Costa Rica also adopted an institutional policy and plan of action for people of African descent’s access to justice, which includes affirmative actions to correct or compensate present and past discrimination and prevent future discrimination.

37. The Tunisian organic law on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination of 2018 includes the right of victims to judicial protection, health care, psychological and social support commensurate with the nature of the discrimination, to have their safety, security, physical and psychological integrity and dignity ensured, and to fair judicial redress proportional to material and moral damage. The law also provides for the designation of an assistant prosecutor to receive complaints of racial discrimination and ensure their follow-up and for the establishment of a special registry for these complaints.

38. In 2020, the Government of Peru presented a draft bill on the promotion of cultural diversity and the prevention and prosecution of racism and ethnic and racial discrimination to parliament. The bill envisages the modification of certain laws to have a consistent legal framework to effectively prevent, eliminate and prosecute

²⁶ Resolution 69/16, annex, para. 17 (a) through (h).

racism and ethnic and racial discrimination. It also proposes to include an article in the criminal code to define “incitement to racial and ethnic hatred”.

39. In Colombia, in September 2020, OHCHR participated in the first public hearing on police violence against people of African descent, in which officials from the national police, organizations of Afrodescendent victims and their relatives participated. As a result of the hearing, 11 cases of police violence against people of African descent were identified from around the country, and the police committed to verifying, jointly with victims’ organizations, the status of the complaints against law enforcement officials.

40. In Spain, the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination, established by law in 2003, provides free and independent assistance, guidance and advice to victims of racial and ethnic discrimination. In Mauritius, the Constitution allows individuals whose fundamental rights and freedoms have been, are being or are likely to be contravened to seek redress before the Supreme Court. Bosnia and Herzegovina is working on the establishment of a unified database for all registered cases of discrimination. In the Pacific region of Colombia, OHCHR has been supporting Afrodescendent women victims of the internal armed conflict to present their case before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

41. As detailed in a previous report of the Secretary-General,²⁷ several human rights mechanisms have expressed concerns about racial profiling in a number of States. Of particular note is general recommendation No. 36 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on preventing and combating racial profiling by law enforcement officials.²⁸

42. The programme of activities of the Decade also calls on States to acknowledge the unfathomable suffering resulting from slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, apartheid and genocide, and to present apologies, honour the memory of the victims and contribute to restoring their dignity.²⁹

43. The National Human Rights Institution of Uruguay is working on the memory and reparation of human rights violations suffered by the Afro-Uruguayan population during the military dictatorship of 1973 to 1985. In consultation with civil society and government bodies, the Institution is finalizing a report that will include recommendations on reparations for the Afro-communities evicted from two informal settlements and, more generally, on the recognition and visibility of people of African descent.

C. Development

1. Right to development and measures against poverty

44. The programme of activities of the Decade recognized that poverty is both a cause and a consequence of discrimination and called on States to remove all obstacles that prevent the equal enjoyment by people of African descent of all human rights, including the right to development.³⁰ Yet, in too many States, people of African descent remain among the most marginalized and excluded groups, and tend not to benefit from the development in their communities and countries. The implementation of the programme of activities is therefore closely linked to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and would directly

²⁷ [A/73/354](#).

²⁸ [CERD/C/GC/36](#).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 17 (i)–(k).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 19–21.

contribute to a number of goals. A previous report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade analysed in more detail racial discrimination and the rights of people of African descent in relation to the sustainable development goals.³¹

45. In 2015, Peru adopted a development plan for the Afro-Peruvian population for 2016–2020. Following the implementation of the “zero hunger” programme, Nicaragua reported that statistics on the growth and development of children collected by the local systems of integrated health care reflected a significant improvement of infant nutrition of children of African descent in the autonomous regions of the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua between 2012 and 2020.

46. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has rolled back years of progress in the global fight against poverty, demonstrating the fragility of the economic and social systems in place. In this complex context, some States have taken measures to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on people of African descent and other groups in situations of vulnerability. In 2020, Peru passed a supreme decree approving the inclusion of an ethnic variable in the administrative registries of public entities. In Colombia, OHCHR promoted the timely inclusion of people of African descent in the socioeconomic measures taken by the Government to attend to the emergency created by the pandemic. National and regional bodies representing people of African descent also presented their own initiatives and requested the support of OHCHR to ensure their inclusion in government mitigation measures.

2. Education

47. Education is an enabling right, which is essential for the realization of other fundamental rights and whose importance was reaffirmed in Sustainable Development Goal 4. For people of African descent, in particular children and youth, having access without discrimination to quality and culturally sensitive education can contribute to breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty.³² Education can also contribute to combating racism, intolerance and negative stereotypes against people of African descent and other marginalized groups.

48. In 2016, the Minister of Education of Costa Rica ordered the revision of all school coexistence regulations to ensure students would not be forced to adapt their phenotypic traits, such as their hair, or be sanctioned for them. Since 2020, the Ministry of Education has also been implementing a protocol of action in situations of racial discrimination and xenophobia, which acknowledged the different forms of discriminatory and xenophobic actions that can happen in school and established a plan to address them.

49. Nicaragua reported that access to English as second language has improved in recent years and is provided in over 70 per cent of schools in Afrodescendent communities. There is also an education plan for the Caribbean region (2014–2021) to improve the quality and relevance of intercultural bilingual education at all levels. According to the authorities, on the Caribbean coast, the analphabetic rate was reduced to 8 per cent in 2020 from 58 per cent in 2007.

50. In Ecuador, the Government has put in place affirmative action policies to address barriers in access to university education for Afro-Ecuadorians, as well as measures to reduce school dropout rates. Between 2007 and 2016, net enrolment in primary education increased by 4.3 per cent for mestizo children and by 5.2 per cent

³¹ [A/74/308](#).

³² For a more detailed analysis of the right to education of Afrodescendent people, see [A/74/308](#) and [A/75/363](#).

for Afro-Ecuadorian children, while net enrolment in secondary education rose by 20 per cent for mestizo adolescents and by 22 per cent for Afro-Ecuadorian adolescents.³³

51. In 2020, an ethnic self-identification question was added in the unique education registration form in Peru, which should enable the registry count of Afro-Peruvian students in the education system at the initial, primary and secondary levels. The education sector also developed 11 educational materials on the history and contributions of people of African descent to the country to guide the pedagogic approach on Afro-Peruvians in schools.

52. In Honduras, UNFPA has been implementing, in alliance with a non-profit organization, a training programme for Afro-Honduran adolescents and youth, including on comprehensive sex education with an emphasis on the prevention of pregnancy in adolescents and gender-based violence. In Ecuador, UNFPA has been developing educational materials adapted to the Afrodescendent population living in the region of Esmeraldas, including material aimed at preventing adolescent pregnancy. In Peru, UNFPA has been supporting the Afrodescendent Youth Leadership School, an initiative of the Ashanti Peru youth organization aiming at training young Afrodescendants in leadership, human rights and effective strategies for participation and political advocacy.

53. As highlighted by OHCHR in its guidance note on racial discrimination in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, during the pandemic, the “widespread closure of schools and other educational and training institutions has caused an unprecedented disruption of education and training for millions of children globally. Many children and youth, particularly those belonging to marginalized racial or ethnic minority groups, do not have equal access to remote learning tools, the Internet, or adequate parental support. These challenges are likely to further setback the education of these children and deepen existing racial inequalities”.³⁴

3. Employment

54. People of African descent often face higher unemployment rates than national averages and, in many countries, they are overrepresented in low-paid or informal employment.³⁵ Employees of African descent can also face racial discrimination in various employment settings in a number of sectors in many States. Women of African descent generally face compounded obstacles to accessing adequate employment.³⁶ Despite the programme of activities of the Decade and Sustainable Development Goal 8, much remains to be done to effectively address the discrimination of people of African descent in the labour market.³⁷

55. Following a general directive, in 2019, the national programme of Peru for the promotion of employment opportunities “Impulsa Perú” added questions on ethnic self-identification. In Nicaragua, the authorities are developing and financing a diversity of projects for income generation in Afrodescendent communities living on the Caribbean coast. In Brazil, UNFPA has been providing job training and preparedness for youth of African descent and support for employment. UNFPA also developed an affirmative and inclusive internship process in their country office specifically aimed at giving opportunities to young professionals of African descent.

³³ A/HRC/45/44/Add.1, para. 57.

³⁴ OHCHR, “Racial discrimination in the context of COVID-19”, p. 4, available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf.

³⁵ A/74/308, para. 23.

³⁶ Ibid., paras. 24 and 29.

³⁷ This was highlighted in reports A/75/363 and A/74/308 on the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade.

4. Health

56. The programme of activities requires States to improve access to quality health services for people of African descent.³⁸ However, it is important to take into account that, as noted by the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, “in terms of the right to health, systemic racism manifests itself through differential access to both health care and the underlying determinants of health”.³⁹

57. Costa Rica adopted a national plan for the health of people of African descent (2018–2021), to facilitate the collection of information disaggregated by population group and information specific to the health of people of African descent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan has been used as a platform to issue recommendations to prevent the spread of the virus among the Afrodescendent population, which, with the support of UNFPA, were translated into the local creole language and distributed electronically to Afrodescendent organizations across the country.

58. In 2017, Peru approved an administrative directive improving the registration of ethnicity in information systems of both public and private health service providers. It reported that implementation of the directive has been met with a number of methodological difficulties, including the lack of knowledge and training of personnel. In 2019, Peru adopted an administrative directive that establishes criteria and procedures for the cultural adaptation of primary health-care services, including care provided to people of African descent. In a 2021 administrative directive, Peru adopted measures aiming at reducing the spread of the pandemic and mitigating its effects among indigenous and Afrodescendent communities.

59. On the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, models of intercultural health care recognize that traditional medicine constitute a fundamental pillar complementing conventional health-care services. The authorities collected data to identify the main causes of death of people of African descent living on the Caribbean coast in 2020, as well as which epidemic illnesses were prevalent in the regions where they lived. In Colombia, UNFPA supported the implementation of a midwifery project to contribute to reducing maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity in the Afro-Colombian and indigenous population in the rural department of Chocó and improving communication between health systems and data collection in vital statistics.

60. Collecting disaggregated data is both essential and urgent to better understand the health situation of Afrodescendent populations, not only in the context of the pandemic, but also to identify specific illnesses that may be prevalent among Afrodescendent individuals and communities, detect specific vulnerabilities and take targeted measures.

5. Housing

61. The adoption of policies designed at ensuring that people of African descent gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity, as requested by the programme of activities,⁴⁰ has remained a major challenge. There have been some positive developments, however. In the autonomous regions of the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, where a large number of Afrodescendent communities live, access to potable water increased to 72 per cent in 2020 from 4 per

³⁸ Resolution 69/16, annex, para. 24.

³⁹ A/HRC/47/28, para. 89.

⁴⁰ Resolution 69/16, annex, para. 25.

cent in 2007. Sewage infrastructure projects are under way in different locations of these regions.

D. Multiple or aggravated discrimination

62. In addition to their racial or ethnic origin, the lives of individuals are often influenced by a myriad of factors, including their gender, family, social status, nationality, migration status and whether they have a disability. Various grounds of discrimination, such as those based on sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth, disability or other status, can compound and aggravate each other across generations. The programme of activities for the implementation of the Decade expressly acknowledged this situation, requesting States to take measures providing effective protection for people of African descent facing multiple forms of discrimination based on other related grounds. The programme of activities underlined in particular the necessity to “mainstream a gender perspective when designing and monitoring public policies, taking into account the specific needs and realities of women and girls of African descent”.⁴¹

63. In Costa Rica, the National Institute for Women developed, together with Afrodescendent women, a national agenda for women of African descent to present progress, gaps, challenges and propositions regarding their political incidence in the areas of health, employment and political participation. In 2020, Peru passed a law proclaiming 25 July the day of Afro-Peruvian women to recognize, value and raise awareness of the participation and contribution of Afro-Peruvian women to social, economic, political and cultural development in the country. Peruvian emergency centres providing services to women facing violence have also included a question on ethnic self-identification for their administrative records.

64. UNFPA developed a regional diagnostic on gender violence against Afrodescendent girls, adolescents and women in Latin America to identify the specific manifestations of violence faced by them. As part of this diagnostic, UNFPA conducted local studies in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru, to analyse local systems of care and prevention of violence against Afrodescendent women and community strategies to transform gender norms in Afrodescendent communities.

65. A more detailed overview of the specific manifestations of intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination faced by women and girls of African descent was included in a previous report of the Secretary-General (A/72/323). The report contained the conclusion that multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination were an obstacle to the realization of the basic rights of women and girls of African descent in all areas of their lives and that while many States had implemented gender-based approaches to their programmes and policies, more remained to be done in the form of special measures, including affirmative action and quota policies, to address the particular vulnerability of women and girls of African descent and the multiple forms of discrimination they suffer.

66. In 2020, the report on the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade highlighted the specific situation of children and youth of African descent who face intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination, in particular in the areas of education, employment and criminal justice, preventing them from achieving their individual optimum development (*ibid.*). It called on States to take urgent steps towards equal access to quality education, health care, decent work and social protection to counteract it. States were also encouraged to enact measures to protect

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para. 27.

children and youth of African descent from systemic violence, by combating stereotyping, racial profiling and discrimination by law enforcement and in the administration of justice.

E. International and regional actions and coordination

67. The United Nations system and regional organizations have actively engaged in a large number of initiatives at the global, regional and local level in support of the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade,⁴² often in coordination with civil society and grass-roots organizations, academia and Governments. A number of United Nations entities are organized in a network on racial discrimination and the protection of minorities created in 2012 and coordinated by OHCHR.⁴³

68. In resolution 75/170, the General Assembly proclaimed 31 August as the International Day for People of African Descent to promote greater recognition and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies, and to further promote respect for the human rights of people of African descent. From 31 August to 4 September 2021, Costa Rica, UNFPA, OHCHR and the Department of Global Communications organized a high-level international forum on the theme “Reaffirming the commitments to people of African descent”, which included several panel discussions and cultural activities, to celebrate the first International Day for People of African Descent.

69. In January 2021, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group task team on leaving no one behind, human rights and the normative agenda (co-led by OHCHR, UNESCO and WHO) organized a “frontier dialogue” to explore key opportunities and entry points for COVID-19 recovery plans to address structural racial and ethnicity-based discrimination and related inequalities. The outcome report of the event guides Governments in addressing structural racism and ethnicity-based discrimination in their COVID-19 recovery efforts. In 2021, UNFPA launched a new programme to hire young professionals from Africa and of African descent.⁴⁴

70. In 2016, the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a Plan of Action for the Decade for Persons of African Descent in the Americas (2016–2025). In 2018, OAS, Peru and the University of Harvard organized the first inter-American meeting of high-level authorities for Afrodescendent populations in Lima, which resulted in the creation of the Inter-American Network of High-level Authorities on Policies for Afrodescendent Populations. The second meeting was organized in 2020 with the support of Costa Rica.

71. In September 2017, member States of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) unanimously approved a policy on ethnicity and health, in which they agreed to guarantee an intercultural approach to health and equitable treatment of indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, Roma populations and members of other ethnic groups. The policy was developed with the participation of representatives from indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and Roma populations. In 2019, the Member States approved a strategy and a plan of action on ethnicity and health to prioritize actions ensuring that all communities have access, without any kind of discrimination, to comprehensive, appropriate, timely and quality health services.

⁴² OHCHR presented a detailed report on its activities under the Decade to the Human Rights Council in September 2020 (A/HRC/45/47).

⁴³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/UNNetworkRacialDiscriminationProtectionMinorities.aspx>.

⁴⁴ See <https://www.unfpa.org/young-professionals-african-descent-programme>.

72. In October 2019, nine Latin American and Caribbean countries adopted a declaration to accelerate the fulfilment of the rights of people of African descent in the region, called the San José commitment, at the end of a high-level meeting organized by UNFPA and the Office of the First Vice-President of Costa Rica. In March 2020, PAHO published a report entitled “Considerations on indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and other ethnic groups during the COVID-19 pandemic”.⁴⁵

73. In October 2020, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and UNFPA published a study entitled “Afrodescendants and the matrix of social inequality in Latin America: challenges for inclusion”, in which they highlighted the urgency of implementing the objectives of the Decade and provided updated information on the situation of people of African descent.⁴⁶ In December 2020, OHCHR and UNFPA, organized a regional dialogue with Afrodescendent leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean and human rights experts to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of African descent and share best practices.

74. In 2016, the European Union established a high-level group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance to foster exchange and disseminate best practices between national authorities. In 2018, the European Union hosted the first People of African Descent Week at the European Parliament to raise awareness about people of African descent and address increasing reports of racial discrimination and violence throughout the European Union. In 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the fundamental rights of people of African descent in Europe.⁴⁷ The European Union also adopted an anti-racism action plan for 2020–2025, encouraging European Union Member States to adopt national anti-racism action plans. In 2020, the Council of Europe held its first hearing on combating Afrophobia. Later that year, the office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights organized a round table with human rights defenders on combating racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent in Europe.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

75. The programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent remains the framework through which the international community commits to improving the lives of millions of people of African descent around the world. The first half of the Decade has seen some promising and positive results, in particular on increasing the general public’s knowledge of and respect for the heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies. However, much remains to be done, especially in the areas of justice and development.

76. States are encouraged to analyse, implement and follow up on recommendations from international, regional and national human rights mechanisms relating to the situation of people of African descent and racial discrimination. National legal frameworks designed to eliminate racial discrimination must be adopted and strengthened, and concrete measures must be taken to put these frameworks into practice. Of particular importance is a human rights-based collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of reliable statistical data on the human rights situation of people of African descent

⁴⁵ Available at <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52251>.

⁴⁶ CEPAL/UNFPA, “Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: retos para la inclusión”, Documentos de Proyectos (LC/PUB.2020/14), Santiago, 2020.

⁴⁷ Resolution 2018/2899(RSP) of the European Council.

as they serve as baselines to measure progress. Data should also be disaggregated on the basis of gender, age, disability, migration and other status to evidence the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women, children and youth of African descent and to address it. States should use the information gathered to design policies which are targeted, inclusive and transformative.

77. Racial discrimination in the administration of justice subverts the rule of law and undermines faith in the justice system. In particular, racial profiling in law enforcement has negative effects on the attitudes and well-being of the people and communities targeted. States should take urgent and comprehensive measures to eliminate systemic discrimination in the administration of justice, in particular law enforcement. States should, in particular, prohibit the practice of racial profiling and ensure that any measures aimed at law enforcement and judicial officials are accompanied by suitable training on non-discrimination. States should also systematically follow through on any reported incident of racial discrimination by law enforcement, in particular incidents leading to killings and serious bodily harm, making use of all available accountability mechanisms. States are encouraged to implement, through concrete measures, an agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, as articulated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which identifies targeted actions in this regard.

78. To reach concrete and tangible results in the area of justice, States should also develop national plans of action to promote diversity, equality, social justice, equality of opportunity and the participation of all, including by means of affirmative or positive actions and strategies.

79. States should enhance efforts to address the barriers faced by people of African descent in realizing their economic, social and cultural rights, as these lead to social exclusion and invisibility, by taking measures to eliminate the conditions that cause or contribute to the perpetuation of racial discrimination. This includes taking special measures, including affirmative action, especially in the areas of access to education, health care, employment, justice and adequate housing. Particular attention should be given to the situation of women, girls, boys and youth who may face compounded discrimination. It is important to bear in mind that women and girls are often inadequately reached by development and other programmes owing to intersecting forms of discrimination. States should also take all necessary measures to give effect to the right of children and young people of African descent to free primary education and access to all levels and forms of quality public education without discrimination.

80. States should continue to encourage and secure the participation of people of African descent in the political, social and economic life, protect and expand the civic space and ensure the representation of people of African descent, in particular women, at the highest levels of decision-making. States should also continuously foster platforms for exchange, dialogue and reflections with Afrodescendent leaders, civil society, national human rights institutions and equality bodies to improve public policies relating to people of African descent.

81. The urgency of stepping up and accelerating the pace of the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade has been made clear by the current global movement against systemic racism and for racial justice. Strong leadership from the international community and State authorities will be needed to address the entrenched legacies of colonialism, enslavement and the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and effectively redress the situation of

people of African descent, including through specific accountability mechanisms and reparations.

82. The United Nations system will continue to give high priority to programmes tailored towards combating racism and racial discrimination, in particular against people of African descent, and step up its support for States to implement the programme of activities of the Decade, including by providing tools such as the OHCHR anti-discrimination database.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Available at <https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/SitePages/Anti-discrimination%20database.aspx>.