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**STATEMENT BY MR. MICHAL BALCERZAK**

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF aFRICAN DESCENT**

Item 7: Discussion on the situation of racial discrimination worldwide

16th session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Geneva, 27 August 2018



Chairperson,

Distinguished representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour for me to address you as Chairperson of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

Mister/Madame Chairperson, allow me to firstly congratulate you on your appointment as Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

As indicated in a joint statement on the occasion of the International Day for the elimination of racial discrimination on 21st of March, resurgent hate and structural discrimination has meant that globally, racial equality is under attack. Extremism and systemic racial exclusion threaten the very political and legal foundations of every single state that forms a part of our international order.

In particular, the Working Group is extremely concerned by the rise in xenophobia and attacks against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and over the racist language increasingly being used about them by representatives of political parties including at the highest levels of Government, across countries and continents. It spans across the political spectrum and is magnified through social media.

As a Working Group which focuses on the human rights situation of people of African descent, the situation is no less different, if not more troubling. Despite the existence of a framework for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance faced by people of African descent, the challenge lies in addressing Afrophobia; in combating the multiple forms of discrimination which people of African descent suffer; by the lack of accountability for acts of racial discrimination and violence, and in maintaining a specific focus on people of African descent as a particular victim group.

During the many factfinding visits conducted by the Working Group in different parts of the world, as well as the allegations of human rights violations received by the Working Group, the accounts of racism and racial discrimination shared by people of African descent are strikingly similar. They all have experiences of having been victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia, racist violence and hate crimes. They fear for their safety as they experience confrontation with law enforcement while being subjected to racial profiling with a high risk of imprisonment. They are often subjected to racial discrimination by their classmates, teachers, workmates, and structural racism by the government and criminal justice system. They are stigmatized and marginalized at the societal level and consequently, they are disproportionally at the lowest rungs of societies they live in, often ending up with the jobs which nobody else wants, living in poor neighbourhoods with constant fear of gentrification and in poor health in sharp contrast to other racial groups.

It is no coincidence that the similar experiences are matched by the absence of policies in many countries to collect disaggregated data based on ethnicity or race. The data collected on foreign born or on people of a migrant background as a measure to guarantee equality in reality, leads to the invisibility of the communities of persons of African descent and prevents racism, racial discrimination and social exclusion from being effectively addressed. Time and again, the Working Group has emphasized that data disaggregated along ethnicity is vital in understanding the severity and scope of racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent, and to develop targeted and holistic responses. People of African descent are calling for equality data to be gathered on the basis of self-identification as an important step in addressing racism they face.

The Working Group also urges States to take action and adopt national action plans against racial discrimination and to introduce special measures, to address systemic racial discrimination against people of African descent, in line with General Recommendation 32 adopted by CERD. In addressing the root causes of racism and racial discrimination, an honest debate about history and its connection to modern day racism is unavoidable. In fact, this is what Recognition- one of the three pillars of the International Decade- implies. The Working Group recognizes that some States have taken steps to improve the protection of the rights of people of African descent however; there is a pressing need to intensify efforts in order to ensure that all States and regions take action.

Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has actively promoted the International Decade for people of African descent and the importance of the draft Declaration and we will continue to do so. We welcome the focus of Member States on the International Decade for People of African Descent. To this end, I would like to thank the Permanent Missions of Azerbaijan, Brazil, Costa Rica, Haiti and Peru, together with OHCHR, for organizing a meeting on the 2nd of July to discuss the future of the draft Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of the Human Rights of People of African Descent, which I participated in.

I also welcome the Human Rights Council’s resolution 35/30, adopted last year, which requested the IGWG to include in its next programme of work a one-day meeting to consider the elaboration of a draft United Nations Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African descent. My fellow Working Group Member Sabelo Gumedze will be actively participating in that meeting day after tomorrow. The Working Group calls on all relevant actors to work together at national, regional and international levels to make the International Decade for People of African descent effective. We stand ready to support all efforts in this regard.

We are also in the early years of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which, together with the International Decade for People of African Descent present excellent opportunities for concrete action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance. The slogan- leaving no one behind- is most apt when it comes to people of African who are among the most marginalized.

In this connection, the Working Group is also intensifying its engagement with international financial and development institutions. We are currently developing an Operational Guideline on the SDGs with relevance to people of African descent, which we intend to field test, so that national programming processes are inclusive and also address the needs of people of African descent, among others.

In conclusion, the Working Group reiterates the importance of unifying our efforts in combating racism and racial discrimination. As part of the international anti-racism architecture, we have a very important responsibility to respond resolutely against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including their contemporary forms and manifestations. I wish us all very rich and outcome oriented deliberations in the coming days.

I thank you for your attention.