Statement by Pakistan at the 12th Session of IGWG on the Implementation of DDPA

(7-17 April 2014)

Mr. Chairperson,

We would like to congratulate you on your re-election as the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the IGWG and hope that under your able leadership IGWG would play a pivotal role in finalizing the Draft Programme of Action for the People of African Descent which is to be submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with OP2 of UNGA Resolution 68/237.

We welcome the proclamation of International Decade for the People of African Descent with the theme “Recognition, Justice and Development. We believe that in proclaiming this decade, the international community is unequivocally recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. In this regard, it may be highlighted that people of African descent are recognized in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action as a specific victim group who continue to suffer racial discrimination, as a historic legacy of transatlantic slave trade.

We firmly believe that without recognizing the distinct identity of people of African descent and their fundamental right to access to justice and development, we cannot combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. Therefore, we welcome the Draft Programme of Action for the decade contained in document A/HRC/21/60/Add.2 prepared by the Working Group of Expert on People of African Descent. We hope that the Programme of Action for the Decade will contribute to achieving equality and non-discrimination and will give impetus to our collective efforts to fight the new and contemporary forms and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. In this regard, we would strongly urge the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a project for the Decade of People of African descent with the view to assist the funding of projects and programmes which promote the goals of the Decade and ensure the effective implementation of the Draft Programme of Action.

Mr. Chairperson,

We believe that the current session of IGWG has been assigned with a very crucial task of finalizing the Draft Programme of Action for the decade which would define the contours of activities and determine the outcome of the decade. While we welcome the drafting of Declaration for the people of African Descent, we strongly believe that International Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted in 1965 must be strengthened. In order to overcome procedural and substantive gaps as underlined in OP3, 4 and 5 of UNGA Resolution 68/151, Optional Protocol to ICERD should be formulated. It is the need of the hour that like all other human rights instruments, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination should evolve and meet the new and contemporary challenges in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances. Through the proclamation of International Decade of People of African Descent the strong commitment to take concrete action cannot be fully translated into tangible outcomes without formulating a legally binding instrument.

Therefore, we would strongly urge the Chair of IGWG to include in the draft program of action to be submitted to the General Assembly following recommendation:

To request the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to draft an Optional Protocol to International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to set up an open-ended inter-governmental working group to finalize the draft Optional Protocol to ICERD which would be presented to the Human Rights Council.

I thank you.