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**STATEMENT BY MR. SABELO GUMEDZE**

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

Item 9: consideration of the elaboration of a draft United Nations Declaration on the promotion and full respect of human rights of people of African descent

1. Why a declaration?

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

Geneva, 29 August 2018



Chairperson,

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

The question of why a United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of human rights of people of African descent (declaration) is needed can be addressed by considering four questions:

1. Who are people of African descent?
2. What is the current situation of people of African descent?
3. Are people of African descent accorded adequate protection of their human rights? and
4. What must happen to provide adequate protection of the rights of people of African descent?

On the first question of who are people of African descent, it is common cause that people of African descent (people with African ancestry) are a particular victim group, who make up some of the most marginalized groups, and who deserve special attention in as far as their enjoyment of their human rights are concerned. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recognizes that people of African descent have been victims of racism, racial discrimination, and enslavement, and of the denial by history of many of their rights, and that they should be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity, and should not suffer discrimination of any kind. It is for this reason that special attention must be given to people of African descent. The consideration of multiple forms of discrimination which people of African descent suffer to this day should also be taken into account.

On the second question of what the current situation of people of African descent is, it is common cause that as a victim group, people of African descent continue to face racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia, and related intolerance. In its assessment, the Working Group finds the human rights situation of people of African descent no less different if not troubling. People of African descent continue to live in fear as they experience untold confrontation with law enforcement while being subjected to racial profiling with a high risk of imprisonment. This fear is compounded by the rise in xenophobia and attacks against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

On the third question of whether or not people of African descent are accorded adequate protection of their human rights, from the fact finding visits conducted by the Working Group in many parts of the world, it is clear that the protection of human rights of people of African descent remains inadequate. This is largely due to their “invisibility”, which result from the fact that many countries do not have policies which allows for the collection of disaggregated data based on ethnicity or race.

While acknowledging the existence of a framework for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance faced by people of African descent, the following challenges remain:- One, Afrophobia is still not adequately addressed; Two, combating the multiple forms of discrimination suffered by people of African descent remains generally ineffective. Three, there is generally lack of accountability for acts of racial discrimination and violence. Four, there is no specific focus on people of African descent as a particular victim group that requires special attention.

On the fourth question on what must happen to provide adequate protection of the rights of people of African descent, the elaboration of a United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of human rights of people of African descent must take place as soon as possible. The elaboration of the declaration is under the auspices of the International Decade for people of African descent, which the Working group continues to actively promote. The importance of the elaboration of the draft declaration, therefore, cannot be overemphasised.

People of African descent are human beings whose rights and freedoms deserve respect, promotion and protection.

I thank you for your attention.