

## **Launching of the International Year for People of African Descent 10 December 2010**

### **Statement on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Navanethem Pillay**

The launching of the International Year for People of African Descent offers a unique opportunity to redouble our efforts and express our political will to promote the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that affect Afro-descendants in all regions of the globe.

In 2001 in Durban, the international community created an ambitious and groundbreaking legal framework that not only reaffirmed the ban on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, but also pointed to concrete ways to overcome them. In particular, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action identified like never before the key elements for international, regional and national strategies that need to be implemented in the struggle against racism that affects people of African descent.

Since 2002, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, established by the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, has covered a wide range of topics of concern to people of African descent. The recommendations made by the Working Group bear eloquent testimony to the fact that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance continue to have a pernicious effect upon the lives of millions of people who, because of the colour of their skin, are the victims of discrimination.

The International Year must become a milestone in the on-going campaign to advance the rights of people of African descent and it deserves to be accompanied by activities that fire the imagination, enhance our understanding of the situation of people of African descent and are a catalyst for real and positive change in the daily lives of the millions of Afro-descendants around the world.

As the voice of human rights within the United Nations system, my Office stands ready to do its part to ensure that the International Year is a success.