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Item 6: Continued Development: Financial/development institutions and their programmes for people of African descent

Check Against Delivery

**Fulfilling the mandate of the WGEPAD in the sphere of „liaising with financial and developmental institutional and operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations” – perspectives and challenges**

Mr Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development as one of the leading themes of the UN Decade on People of African Descent has been frequently discussed in the activities of the Working Group. It is worth recalling that the last year’s public session was specifically focused on the right to development and areas which deserve special attention in this respect, such as education, employment, protection of health and housing. It has been common understanding that the enjoyment of these rights by People of African Descent is far from being satisfactory.

The purpose of the present panel is to recall about the importance of continued development to serve the needs and human rights of People of African Descent. But apart from just reaffirming the significance of development, it is also necessary to elaborate on practical steps which can be taken by the Working Group itself in order to promote and support programmes and projects intended for People of African Descent in various areas related with development.

To this end it should be reminded that the mandate of the Working Group includes a potentially very useful tool for promoting development, but also other goals of the Decade. I am referring to the rather „forgotten” or at least not exercised competence provided explicitely in the Group’s mandate, and notably „contributing to the development programmes intended for People of African Descent” undertaken by international financial and development institutions, operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Let us have a closer look at this part of the Group’s mandate and reflect on the possible ways that it can serve for the benefit of People of African Descent.

First, the idea of the WG’s „linking” and co-operating with „international and development institutions and the specialized agencies of the United Nations” goes back to the original mandate of the Group, i.e. the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/68. Interestingly, the resolution establishing the Working Group actually entrusted it with the task of „developing programmes intended for People of African Descent” in close collaboration with international and development institutions. The subsequent resolutions of the Human Rights Council which extended the Group’s mandate slightly reformulated this task and the current mandate requires that the WG engages into:

**„Liaising with financial and development institutional and operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nationas, with a view to contribute to the development programmes intended for people of African descent”**

The mandate specifies further that the Group’s contribution should result in

**„allocating additional investments to health systems, education, housing, electricity, drinking water and environmental control measures and promoting equal opportunities in employment, as well as other affirmative or positive measures and strategies within the human rights framework”.**

It should be reminded also that in the Programme of activities for the implementation of the Decade, the international financial and development institutions have been urged **to give high priority to programmes and projects specifically tailored for combating racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent.** Although the WG has not been explicitely entrusted with the tusk of assessing or supervising the performance of the entities referred to above, I believe that it is within our mandate to bring the attention of the financial and development institutions to the aims and priorities of the Decade.

In other words, there are at least two principal tasks of the WG in the context of its liaising with international financial and development institutions, and notably:

1. To contribute to the development programmes intended for people of African descent, as provided in paragraph 8 of its mandate,
2. to raise the aims and priorities of the Decade in contacts with these institutions, and insist that they prioritize programs and projects specifically tailored for people of African descent.

Let me be very clear about it: I consider the above tasks as being part and parcel of the Group’s mandate and completely within the field of its competence. For many years the Group’s activites were primarly focused on elaborating proposals and recommendations addressed to states on how to effectively combat racial discrimination against People of African descent and improve their human rights situation. I am not suggesting that this should change. Rather, the Group should engage into active dialogue **also** with international development and financial institutions to work out its role as a competent body to contribute to programmes intended for people of African descent.

I wish to use this opportunity to address a certain statement made in this room on Monday morning. There has been an allegation expressed by one of the voices from the floor that the Group „forgot its roots and instead was seeking partners on the basis of money rather than principles and experiences in supporting the Durban Declaration and the Programme of Action”. This allegation is manifestly unfounded since the Group has never considered nor entered into „seeking partners on the basis of money”. The only reason I am referring to that untrue allegation is to prevent another misunderstanding. I am not advocating for the Group’s liaising with financial and development institutions because they have budgets but because the mandate of the Group bounds us to seek such contacts and contribute to the development programmes. It goes without saying that the Group’s contribution is supposed to be provided through expert advice, recommendations, evaluations, etc.

On a practical level, the actions undertaken by the Group in order to fulfill its tasks referred to above should include:

1. studying the agendas of the international financial and development institutions with view of identifying relevant programmes and issues;
2. considering ways to be actively involved in the consultation proces of development programmes intended for People of African descent, both at the planning stage, as well as in the course of their implementation,
3. encouraging relevant development and financial institutions to take more interest in the WG’s activities, including to participate in its public sessions,
4. regularly reporting on its contribution to the development programmes,
5. last but not least – considering ways to involve other relevant actors in the process of consulting and contributing to the development programmes.

The list of international financial and development institutions which should be taken into account in pursuing the above aims is substantial. Without attempting to draft an exhaustive list, it appears reasonable to start from having a closer look at the activities of the World Bank Group as well as regional development banks, such as the Inter-American Development Bank. Some of these institutions have already a long record when it comes to promoting development in African-descendant communities. Needless to say, in evaluating and contributing to such programmes the Group should adopt a critical approach and verify the outcomes of specific programme. In particulrar, we should be very mindful of how the programmes influence the interests and human rights of People of African Descent.

Given that our mandate extends to liaising with developmental institutional and operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations, we should undertake efforts to engage into effective dialogue with the United Nations Development Program as well as selected organizations being part of the UN Development Group. As with the financial institutions, some of these agencies have already implemented specific programmes which are of our interest, just to mention the regional project „Afrodescendant Population of Latin America” endorsed by the UNDP in 2009-2011).

To conclude, the Working Group is determined to go beyond theoretical considerations when it comes to promoting development and contribute to programmes specifically tailored for People of African descent. Time has come to actively pursue the Group’s mandate in this respect. However, the results of these efforts depend to the large extent on how much knowledge we have on such programs. We hope that states and the civil society will be willing to share with us their experience when it comes to development and financial programmes intended for People of African descent. We know that not every such programme has been considered successful by those directly involved or affected. Therefore we would encourage states to share their experience in this respect. By the same token, we invite the civil society to bring to our attention any concerns or difficulties that they may have encountered when being involved in the programmes intended for People of African descent. I believe that with your assistance the Working Group will succeed in its tasks.

Thank you for your attention.