

TO: Ms. Christina Saunders
Secretary, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent
Anti-Racial Discrimination Section
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FROM: A. Clifford (Bro. Cliff Kuumba)
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Deputy Coordinator North America, Pan African Federalist Movement (PAFM)

DATE: Sunday, November 22, 2020

RE: WGEPAD Midterm Review Session Interest

Greetings:

Thank you for the opportunity to make a brief statement pursuant to the 26th Session of the WGEPAD Mid-Term Review.

I understand that this Session will be held on Monday, November 23 at 1500 CET (3:00 PM Central European Time), which should correspond to 9:00 AM Eastern Time in the United States, where I live.

I am uncertain of the procedure from this point, so I will depend on you to clarify what I should do in the event that I will be able to make a statement. In the event that I am not afforded an opportunity to make a statement during the Session, I will then need some clarification as to the procedure for accessing UN Web TV and participating through social media.

Since I am unfamiliar with the specific guidelines for the submittal of statements and your response was received by me on Sunday, November 22, literally one day prior to the actual Session, I offer the following statement unedited to ensure that you receive it within a reasonable time period. I may be able to edit further for length if necessary between now and tomorrow's Session.

Introduction

My given name is Alan Clifford. Colleagues of mine in the activist community know me as Brother Cliff. I am the Maryland State Facilitator of the Sixth Region Diaspora Caucus (SRDC), dedicated to bringing the voice of the Grassroots Pan-Afrikan Diaspora from the fields and streets where we struggle every day to the International Arena. I am also the Deputy Coordinator for North America of the Pan African Federalist Movement (PAFM), whose mission is to bring about the unification of the Black nations and populations of the world in the United African States.

Three (3) key points occurred as I was considering what statements I wanted to make towards the United Nations, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. Rather than recount the various charges that have doubtless already been made numerous times against my country of citizenship, the United States, I am more

concerned with what actions the UN itself can and must take to rectify these ongoing crises so that, when the End-Term Review is held after five more years, the same conditions are not being re-hashed again and again. That these situations still exist, after the Civil Rights era-struggles, the Black Power Movement, the push for Reparations, the World Conference Against Racism and its various Review Conferences, the DDPA, the CERD, the CEDAW, the Maputo Protocols and so many other conferences, task forces and declarations, is a clear indication that too much time and energy have been spent talking about these problems and not enough time listening or doing. Thus, my call is for more access to strategizing and decision-making for those of us "down here on the ground" at the WGEPAD, the OHCHR and the UN in general. In support of my argument, I offer the following three (3) points, though there are clearly many more that I could call upon:

I. Slavery as a Crime Against Humanity

II. The Rights of Women, Particularly Women of Afrikan Descent

III. Grassroots and Civil Society Access and Representation at WGEPAD, OHCHR and the UN in General

I. Slavery as a Crime Against Humanity

In the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), September 7, 2001, the United Nations has established that

"... slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and further acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance ..." (Paragraph 99)

The United Nations further

"[u]rges States to adopt the necessary measures, as provided by national law, to ensure the right of victims to seek just and adequate reparation and satisfaction to redress acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and to design effective measures to prevent the repetition of such acts ..." (Paragraph 166)

The UN News Web site

(<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1045972#:~:text=Incidents%20of%20modern-day%20slavery%20are%20%E2%80%9Conly%20likely%20to,around%20the%20world%2C%20a%20quarter%20of%20them%20children.>), on September 9, 2019, reported on their own study of the continued prevalence of slavery worldwide that:

The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Urmila Bhoola, explained that over 40 million people are enslaved around the world, a quarter of them children. Due to problems of

environmental degradation, migration and shifting demographics, the scourge of modern-day slavery is expected to grow.

“We cannot afford to stand by while more and more people are driven into forced labour, servile marriage or child labour,” she said. “[I]t is imperative” anti-slavery efforts are “systematic, scientific, strategic, sustainable, survivor-informed, and smart” she maintained.

Current efforts to end slavery are falling short and States and businesses “must take more decisive action to end slavery,” Ms. Bhoola concluded. This must be done “by committing more resources to this effort and by adopting and implementing public policies which address contemporary forms of slavery effectively.” (UN News article)

Pursuant to these declarations, the United Nations must redouble their efforts to pressure state actors who continue to propagate and support the enslavement of vulnerable communities, especially since Afrikan people are known to comprise a considerable number of those enslaved, whether as a result of their attempts to flee unstable conditions in North Afrika (in particular, Libya) or their conscription into mining operations in places such as DR Congo, where tantalum powder is still considered an important resource for the development and operation of cell phone and related technology. These efforts must be accompanied by an international push against current and historic offender nations, such as the United States, to put into effect the awarding of Reparations for historic slavery and modern-day exploitation of Afrikan People.

II. The Rights of Women, Specifically Women of Afrikan Descent

Another UN-related Web site (<https://www.un.org/en/letsfightracism/women.shtml>), makes the following statement:

In the DDPA, states declare they “Are convinced that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reveal themselves in a differentiated manner for women and girls, and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination, and the limitation or denial of their human rights.” States further recognized “the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination.”

The majority of the world’s poorest people are women, who are further affected by discrimination if they belong to minority groups. Women suffer disproportionately from discriminatory labour practices and are frequently forced into underground or informal sectors. Members of racially discriminated groups do not enjoy equal access to health, education or justice, and such access is further limited for women. ...

Women who are discriminated against on the basis of both gender and race are frequently subject to violence. In armed conflicts, women are sometimes explicitly targeted because of race or ethnic background. Rape and other forms of violence against women have been used as

weapons of war in conflicts throughout history.

Among the numerous references to gender in the DDPA, violence against women is given some prominence. ... The DDPA also calls for an end to impunity for such crimes and the prosecution of those responsible.

Global and local civil society, national governments, regional courts and institutions, and international institutions increasingly recognize women's rights through such international instruments as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), regional mechanisms like the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa to the African Charter on Human or Peoples' Rights, or the European Union Gender Equality Directives. Other mechanisms, such as the Convention to Eliminate Racial Discrimination (CERD), also address the rights of minority women. ...

However, despite the crucial intersection of discrimination against women and racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, there are as yet limited efforts that link these human rights mechanisms to promote the rights of women facing multiple forms of discrimination. (UN article)

If the efforts to link the various human rights mechanisms to fight racial, gender and intersectional discrimination are, as stated above, "limited", then the current strategy for righting the wrongs committed against women, and minority women in particular, need to be reviewed and changed.

III. Grassroots and Civil Society Access and Representation at WGEPAD, OCHCHR and the UN in General

One of the major frustrations expressed by organizations that meet and work directly with people "on the ground", or grassroots civil society, is that the major international and regional organizations that possess the authority and the resources to effect improvements in the lives of our constituents are too often alienated from the very communities they were empaneled to serve. Afrikan Diaspora organizations that engage with communities in town hall meetings, that hear the stories and struggles of the people and that often must endure those struggles themselves, usually have no idea what organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union or the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent are or who their members are, much less what impact these organizations have, or may potentially have, on their lives. Those few of us who are aware of the AU, the UN and WGEPAD still have limited knowledge of what these organizations are actually doing on behalf of Afrikan people worldwide, and especially feel that we will have no input into these organizations' plans moving forward, especially when our efforts to interact with them are met as frequently as they are with bureaucratic barriers that we are led to assume are rooted in an attitude that our relatively-small organizations are insignificant and thus can be ignored.

If this situation is to be rectified, and the work of UNOHCHR and WGEPAD is to be advanced in an effective way, the voice of global Afrikan grassroots civil society must find access at the decision-making level in these organizations. While members of the Afrikan Diaspora lack the status of the heads of

state in the UN and thus have received no true recognition on the basis of controlling a defined land base, the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should be able to establish a procedure through which Global Afrikan Civil Society can establish such a voice on the world stage. A panel of "experts", however well-meaning, well-educated and well-resourced, cannot substitute for the voices of those of us who have lived through, struggled with, and worked together to overcome the conditions which these global organizations and panels were created to rectify in the first place.

Conclusions

(1) The UN must redouble their efforts to ensure that slavery and forced labor are eradicated, as this disproportionately impacts people of Afrikan Descent, now and throughout history.

(2) The UN must put further pressure on its member states to eliminate gender and racial discrimination, especially against Women of Afrikan Descent who are most severely targeted.

(3) To those ends, the UN must provide better communication and a clearer conduit for the voices of the Global Afrikan Grassroots, specifically the landless masses of the Diaspora, to participate meaningfully in the strategizing and decision-making mechanisms of the UN, the UNOHCHR and WGEPAD.

Respectfully submitted,

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