

Concept Note

26th Session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

Regional meetings with civil society

23-25 November 2020

1. Introduction

General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/137 and the Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/42/29 indicated the convening of a midterm review, in 2020, of the International Decade for People of African Descent. To support this process, the Working Group of Experts on people of African Descent has dedicated time within its 26th session (originally scheduled for 30 March- 3 April 2020 and rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic to November 2020) to prepare for the midterm review and the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to be held next year.

The midterm review is an important benchmark to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the programme of activities of the Decade. The review is vital for assessing the effectiveness of the programme of activities of the International Decade its first five years and, based on the assessment, generating improvements for the next five years.

The WGEPAD report to the 45th session of the Human Rights Council focused on [COVID-19, systemic racism and global protests](#). The Working Group emphasized that structural racial discrimination exacerbates inequality in access to health care and treatment, leading to racial disparities in health outcomes and increased mortality and morbidity for people of African descent. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought racial disparity and discrimination to the surface in institutions designed to confer justice, equity and redress. The Working Group analysed the connections between the COVID-19 pandemic, police impunity and global protest, and made recommendations thereon.

The WGEPAD also issued two calls for input in 2020 on the impact of COVID-19 and the mid-term review of the International Decade for people of African descent. The Working Group is very grateful for the submissions received and looks forward to discussing them during the Regional meetings with civil society.

2. Objectives

At the mid-term of the International Decade for people of African descent and during the COVID-19 pandemic it is critically important to hear from people of African descent and civil society on what has been happening in local contexts, what works, and what they would like to see prioritized. This is an opportunity to strategize on applying the international human rights framework and the momentum of this moment to combat racial discrimination faced by people of African descent.

This series of regional meetings at the mid-term of the International Decade for people of African descent is designed to allow the Working Group to engage with and

learn from civil society and its experiences, to ascertain the situation on the ground thus far, and to determine which strategies may improve and enhance efforts to effectively prevent racial discrimination faced by people of African descent.

3. Methodology

Due to COVID-19 restrictions the 26th WGEPAD session will be virtual. The session will include a series of regional public meetings with people of African descent and civil society to strategize on the way forward at the mid-term of the International Decade for people of African descent. (Room XX Palais des Nations)

Regional meetings will be held as follows:

- **Asia and the Pacific** 23 November 09.30-11.30 (CET), interpretation in Chinese, English and French
- **Western Europe and North America** 23 November 15.00-17.00 (CET), interpretation in English, French and Spanish
- **Middle East and Africa**, 24 November 10.00-12.00 (CET), interpretation in Arabic, English and French
- **Latin America and the Caribbean**, 24 November 15.00-17.00 (CET), interpretation in English, French and Spanish
- **Eastern Europe and Central Asia**, 25 November 10.00-12.00 (CET) interpretation in Russian, English and Chinese.

Participation

The Working Group invites people of African descent, civil society organizations, as well as, national human rights institutions and independent national mechanisms and equality bodies that address racial discrimination to participate in these regional meetings. Other participants will include OHCHR staff working in this thematic area, and experts on people of African descent issues. Due to COVID-19 restrictions it will be a public virtual meeting using the remote simultaneous interpretation platform Interprefy. It will be webcast and participants can register to be a speaker, or participate via social media or send a written submission. For more details please see the **Note on how to participate in the Regional Meetings**

Please check for the 26th session webpage for updates and documentation.

<https://ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/WGEPADIndex.aspx>

For more information please contact the Secretariat of the Working Group at: africandescent@ohchr.org

Guiding questions:

The midterm review of the international decade for people of African descent and the 20th anniversary of the DDPA will take stock of the progress made and decide on further necessary actions. The Working Group would appreciate receiving views from people of African descent and civil society on the following:

A. What has been happening?

What are the key human rights concerns of people of African descent in your country/region today? Have these concerns become more apparent in the last 9 months and, if so, how? In the last 5 years? In the last 20 years?

B. What works?

- a. What have been the key achievements in realizing the three objectives of the International Decade (Recognition, Justice, and Development) for people of African descent?
- b. In the last five years, what examples exist of relevant legislative measures, implementation of national actions plans or policies, establishment of monitoring and complaint mechanisms, awareness raising and institutional strengthening activities, research, data collection, community engagement, or other measures or activities undertaken by Member States, national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society, and UN agencies, funds and programmes?

C. What do you want to see prioritized in the next 5 years?

4. Outcome

The Regional meetings will enhance the WGEPAD's understanding of key human rights concerns of people of African descent today. It will also result in concrete suggestions for how strengthen and increase our impact building on good practices, using the existing human rights framework and the momentum to effectively address the most pressing human rights concerns of people of African descent. By bringing together the Working Group and civil society, the event will also strengthen collaborative efforts to implement the Programme of Activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent and international human rights law for the protection of the human rights of people of African descent. The outcomes of the regional meetings will feed into the [27th WGEPAD session entitled "The Urgency on now: systemic racism and the lessons of 2020"](#) and the Working Group's report to the Human Rights Council in September 2021.

5. About the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD), established in 2002, has actively pursued the human rights concerns of people of African descent through implementation of its mandate. It holds annual thematic sessions, undertakes fact-finding country visits, responds to information and allegations received concerning its mandate under the Communications procedure and reports to United Nations Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on activities relating to the mandate. More information about the mandate and the work of the Working Group can be found on its webpage: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/WGEPADIndex.aspx> The Working Group also continues to play an important role in advocating for the implementation of the Programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).