

December 1, 2020

## Balancing the Past, Present, and Future

**Re: 27th session, entitled "The Urgency of Now: Systemic Racism and the Lessons of 2020"**

Dear Madam Chair, Members of the Working Group, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocols duly observed

First, we trust that you and your families are staying safe and sane during these unprecedented times.

Secondly, we express deep gratitude for your consistency and tireless efforts to increase visibility, identify gaps and guide the formulation of policies and actions to prevent, combat and eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent worldwide.

Thirdly, with references to MIPAD [2020 Global Reckoning Edition](#), Durban Declaration [A/CONF 189/12](#), WGEPAD Report [A/HRC/42/59](#) and Creation of PAD Permanent Forum [A/PFPAD/2019/1](#) / [A/C.3/75/L.50/Rev.1](#) we are writing this letter to call your urgent attention to move from expressing concern to concrete action, on the following 3 critical issues; (a) **Past**; commemoration of Durban Declaration (DDPA) (b) **Present**; creation of a PAD permanent forum (c) **Future**; ensuring that biases reflected throughout society do not get embedded in algorithms and machine learning in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (Ai).

**Lastly, what do we want to see prioritized in the next 5 years?** As we approach the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), which falls within the International Decade for People of African Descent and both coinciding with a Big Data revolution, we are yet to record notable successes in this space for algorithm justice. As we approach the end of the decade, how can we leverage the powers of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to achieve algorithmic justice and find a balance between the past, present, and future? If computer algorithms via machine learning can learn and improve automatically through experience, how can we teach machines about human kind's past experiences of discrimination to avoid including it in our future? How do we ensure an effective permanent forum is created as a platform for people of African descent to address these issues after the end of the international decade in 2024?

It is in this light, we urge the United Nations Human Rights Office and the Working Group of Experts to

- 1- Mark the commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DDPA and the midterm of the International Decade with the establishment of a permanent forum as a worthy milestone to indict your commitment to the people of African descent worldwide.
- 2- Coordinate visits, similar to country visits, to major technology companies and hubs across the world. From Apple to Silicon Valley and beyond to China to engage entities, who have become just as important as member states, creating for deployment into all the world, technologies of the future. With the aim of facilitating engagement between stakeholders to highlight the dangers it poses if human biases are embedded in algorithms, coding and data-driven commercial and military products, like facial recognition software, policing equipment's, autonomous weapons systems and signature strike targeting programs etc.
- 3- Support MIPAD in mobilizing expertise of people of African descent worldwide as a coalition of experts to organize as independent auditors or agency ensuring the safety, efficacy, and security of technologies and algorithms before deployment into the real world. MIPAD is planning the release of a global 100 list to recognize people of African descent making positive contribution to the emerging 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution.

In closing, we acknowledge the importance of our past and advocating for reparation, restitution and reconciliation. Also, we believe, without a doubt, that if we do not take immediate actions, the very root causes of systemic racism we are fighting in our present will be programmed into our future.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response in action.

Sincerely,



Kamil Olufowobi, Founder & CEO, Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD)

