

Statement at the 28th Session of the WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

- Item 6: Thematic Discussion: Environmental Racism, the Climate Crisis and reparatory justice, Friday 26 March 2021

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Reparatory justice—as a matter of addressing structural injustices and inequities within and among countries, which are a result or continuation of historical injustices and inequities—is arguably integral to sustainable social, economic and environmental development.

Still, as I believe has been addressed by the Working Group, the current SDGs – including, SDG 10 towards equality within and among countries – do little to address systemic racial discrimination and inequities within and among countries.

For example, race is merely included in two of the SDGs, people of African descent are not mentioned once and neither is the self-determination and sovereignty of peoples over their natural resources.

Overall, the colonial roots of much of the racial discrimination and inequities in the world as well as their institutional embeddedness in the makeup of nation-states, international relations, the unequal distribution of resource-extraction, labor rights, production, consumption and profit in the global economy are not addressed by the SDGs.

There is a dire need to correct this in future efforts toward sustainable development.

This future will need to include three institutional reforms at the international level. First, democratic reforms towards a democratic and equitable governance at the UN, World Bank, IMF and WTO. Second, treaties and other means towards establishing an equitable and non-discriminatory new international economic order. Third, establishing new treaties, mechanisms or other means towards redressing racial inequities among as well as within countries, including, halting and reversing the lasting consequences of colonialism and enslavement.