Recommendations to the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD).

Churches Together in England’s Racial Justice Working Group, 24th July 2021.

Churches Together in England and its Racial Justice Working Group (RJWG) together form one of the most representative church constituencies in the UK representing millions of Christians and unites the broadest range of churches in the whole of Europe to tackle the issue of racial injustice. Churches Together in England’s RJWG welcomes the opportunity to share with (WGEPAD) the positive measures it has undertaken and to submit recommendations to improve thehuman rights situation of people of African descent globally.

Our recommendations address four areas: 1) Vaccination, Covid-19 recovery, and Health inequalities; 2) Trade, Taxation and Debt cancellation; 3) Civic society equity and the criminal justice system; 4) Implications of Climate Change. Recommendations will be highlighted under each area proceeding the positive measures that have been undertaken.

**Positive Measures**

Following the murder of George Floyd and the global Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, Churches Together in England established its RJWG comprising of denominational leaders and racial justice directors across England. The aim of the working group is to:

1. Foster a collaborative culture amongst member churches to promote racial justice programmes so that churches can become beacons of best practice.
2. For racism and racial inequality to become ecclesially and socially unacceptable.

The working group is constituted as a subgroup of Churches Together in England’s Board to ensure that tackling racial inequality and injustice in England is embedded into the structure of the organisation as well as churches across England on a national, regional, and local level.

Some of the positive measures that Churches Together in England and its Racial Justice Working Group have established are:

* Encouraging the take up of the vaccines amongst black and global majority diaspora groups living in England.
* Championing, partnering, and encouraging black majority church leaders to use their buildings as vaccine centres in collaboration with the National health service. This has resulted in an increased uptake of the vaccine to counter the disproportionality of black mortality caused by Covid-19.
* A series of webinars with national health and governmental officials hosted by black majority church leaders of African descent to inform, legitimise concerns and debunk myths.
* Several public official statements from the 6 presidents of Churches Together in England who represent millions of Christians across the UK and globe denouncing racism and racial injustice.
* A series of roundtables with the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, British Black millennials, and Gen Z’s to address inequalities in England’s criminal justice system and to build strategic partnerships to strengthen the fragmented relationship between the police and people of African descent in England.
* A global Candle of Justice Campaign gathering churches and thousands of people to light a candle in remembrance of George Floyd on his 1year anniversary and a public commitment of action to tackle racial injustice.
* Contributing to the government’s taskforce in compensating the victims of the Windrush immigration scandal to Caribbean diaspora communities that came to rebuild Britain after the war.
* A campaign to assess the disproportionality of people of African descent in the Criminal Justice System.

**Recommendations**

1. **Vaccination, Covid-19 recovery, and Health inequalities**

To improve the human rights of people of African descent, the RJWG recommends that:

* The health and mental wellbeing of African descent people across the globe is prioritised by nation states and funded as a form of reparations due to centuries of economic, civic, and social oppression.
* That sufficient economical support, help to institute welfare systems and furlough schemes are made available to African and Caribbean nation states in recovering from the economic impact of the pandemic.
* Vaccines are equally distributed to African and Caribbean nation states and to people of African descent in a fair and equitable way.
* The RJWG also warn that if these developments are not implemented there will be a risk of increased global immigration.
* Global accountability against corruption in government and that money is used to build civic society.

1. **Trade, Taxation and Debt cancellation**

To improve the human rights of people of African descent, economic development, equity, and sustainability will need to be implemented. The RJWG recommends:

* To implement debt cancelation to African and Caribbean Nation states as a form of reparations and to reduce the economic burden of the Pandemic.
* For the UN to develop and produce a legal accountability framework, scrutiny panel and trade embargoes, to scrutinise the conditions of trade and investment deals to African and Caribbean nation states and people of African descent to ensure they are equitable and equal. E.g., UK farmers are subsidised, yet Caribbean and African farmers are not.
* To ensure that trade and investment deals do not become a form of neo colonialism, exploitation, and unfair economic control.
* Negotiate with the west to reduce taxation of trade over a considerable period to enable increased revenue to go back to countries of African descent to help with development, to build sustainability and reduce dependency.
* It would be useful if the UN could provide some technical support for this to happen that will monitor development, progress, and accountability. It is also recommended that member states are kept updated of the progress. This should be an outcome of the working group.

1. **Civic society equity and the criminal justice system**

To improve the human rights of people of African descent, their treatment in civic life, institutions and the law needs to be reformed. The RJWG recommends:

* A review of the disproportionality of people of African descent in the prison system.
* A review and reform of the legal system that distributes harsher sentences and punishment of people of African descent.
* A review and system of reform into access of affordable housing.
* A review and system of reform into the accessibility of people of African descent being able to access loans and financial support to start businesses.
* A review into the equity and equality of visa distribution and fairness for payment of visas for African and Caribbean states. E.g. People of African descent and nation states pay more than Europeans for visa applications and must reapply more frequently. This is causing immeasurable distress and adverse mental health issues to people of African descent.

1. **Implications of Climate Change.**

To improve the human rights of people of African descent, the impact of climate change needs to be considered. The RJWG recommends:

* Look at how we link the current climate crisis to the challenges facing the African and Caribbean diaspora. For instance, when we look at the adverse weather conditions in the Caribbean and Africa and the cost to rebuild nation states after these disasters, this is often a direct result of western consumption.
* The climate crisis negatively impacts the ability to grow produce, farming and this consequently impacts trade which results in stagnation and lack of sustainability.
* Cop26 and climate campaign to focus on Africa, the Caribbean and how they can develop, bid, and benefit from eco contacts to create jobs and sustainability.

Churches Together in England’s RJWG reaffirm our longstanding commitment to racial justice and the human rights issues of people of African descent and look forward to future opportunities to work with the Un Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD).

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