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IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISIONS OF THE DURBAN PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS OF VICTIMS:

AFRICANS AND PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

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Note: The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author.

CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION OR DENIAL? THE DYNAMICS OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The main objective of this article is to assess, from the academic perspective and point of view of civil society, the factors involved in the implementation of provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action for the specific group of Afro-American[1] victims, which could serve as the basis for formulating short-, medium- and long-term recommendations.

In order to place the subject in its proper context, it is important to review some of the assumptions and historically conditioned notions about the interrelations of the subjects of this paper, namely the Afro-American population of the Latin American and Caribbean region, in order to obtain an overview that will make it possible to identify the most pressing problems and come up with ideas that are more focused on solving the problem than on speech-making and formalist approaches.[2]

As a basic background element, it should be pointed out that the social structure and hierarchy introduced by the Iberian conquistadors in the colonized regions of the Americas resulted in the racial mixing of the European conquistadors with native Americans and Africans. This produced mixtures with distinct social and functional roles, which in this document are called "pigmentocracy".[3]

The system, which in this document is referred to as "pigmentocratic",[4] affects and hierarchizes millions of people "categorized by sub-ethnic groups and colorimetric systems" in innumerable combinations, hierarchized according to their real or imagined closeness to, or distance from, the white referent.[5]

As a consequence of the foregoing, the perception of the reality of racism and racial discrimination in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole has been obscured by the structural and homogenizing paradigm of the myth of "racial justice" and of the virtual absence of "racism" and "racial discrimination" in the countries of the region. The myth of racial mixture and racial democracy has been and continues to be shared to such an extent by the majority of Afro-Americans in almost all Latin American and Caribbean countries that their perception of reality has been distorted: *"what we see is what they have taught us to see"*.[6]

Put in more graphic terms, it is a question of living in a de facto racist environment without talking about racism in educational institutions, the media or in everyday situations. This is the case in societies in which the structural forces of everyday racism, oppression, repression and legitimization maintain centuries-old inequalities.[7]

It should be reiterated in this connection that many of the racializing paradigms of culture in the region are particularly powerful and tenacious, especially when they are promoted by dominant groups. The predominance of the macro-world of historical subordination, based on cultural origin and discrimination against the Afro-American population, is one of the most important social and political challenges faced by the countries of the region. Although it has a socialist Government, Cuba exemplifies the situation in the region. This generalization is also applicable to all other countries of the region.

In this regard, a collective effort is essential, not only on the part of the Afro-American community but also the regional and international academic community and social organizations, particularly human rights organizations, to remove the mask of epistemological colour blindness that prevents us from seeing the realities of the condition and soul of individuals and communities of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean.[8]

Myths and realities of racism in the region

In Latin America and the Caribbean, historical evidence and recent experience have shown, at least in the case of the Afro-American population, that, owing to the very nature of the spread of racism and racial discrimination at the regional level, strategies to solve that problem cannot be delegated exclusively to the States of the region or restricted to mere intra- or intergovernmental formalism. In order to be effective and relevant, such strategies must rely on the assistance, active participation and mediation of, and monitoring by, regional and international multilateral organizations in close cooperation with Afro-American citizens and their organizations, the academic community and human rights institutions in general.

The cultural nature of the phenomenon and its relation to the socio-historical conditions of the colonization of Latin America and the Caribbean probably account for the continuing qualitative and quantitative underestimation of local and regional cultural dynamics, and of culture as a concept of paramount political importance for analysing the cultural ideologies of race applicable to specific contexts and practices relating to the situation of the Afro-American population in the region.

In order to determine the origins and very nature of the phenomenon as such, we would have to go back to the creation of imaginary concepts, such as the European notion of "race", which arose around the year 1500; the Oxford English Dictionary describes the word as having "obscure roots".[9]

This definition must be understood as an invention that has been inculcated into the very fabric of the nations of Latin America as a global participant in the process. This is supported by the widespread use of erratic combinations of heredity, nature, climate, culture and history - a kind of biological and cultural determinism - to identify the spirits and souls of the world's people.[10]

In this regard, the cultural definition of "race" has been an invention in which the nations of Latin American have participated. A key element of this definition is racial mixture and cross-breeding, which persists at the regional level as a basic element of political and sociocultural rhetoric, without ever being transformed into a nation-building project led by the State or, even better, a group of States. Perhaps because of its exclusive nature according to which only the common people were mestizos.[11] [12]

In this game of appearance and self-denomination, the elite, which calls itself "white" regardless of skin colour or cultural mixture, has always been concerned about not being tarnished by racial mixture. It was and remains geographically and socially well placed to hold its position: the members of the elite live according to the dictates of morality and good manners.

In this scenario, the "remaining" groups are considered to be in the "wrong place" and to be preoccupied with moving "forward and upward but never backwards",[13] towards the dominant group that has the physical and cultural attributes of the colonial elite, perceived as "the chosen".

The role played by the concept of race, and its disintegration as a malleable element of historical and cosmological significance for explaining contemporary social situations, which subjugated and oppressed groups have internalized (and therefore have resisted forming racial identities), with its consequent effects on economic, political and social development,[14] is a subject that in the region is being seriously studied in its local context.

Since the colonial era, the idea of distinct imaginary systems of biocultural beings - white, Black, Indian - justified a vast colonial system of white supremacy and enslavement of Blacks and Indians on the basis of class subordination. In this regard, Negritude and indigenousness are intimately linked throughout history, since they are the products of a structure and stigmatizing social institution in which Indians were considered as "the others" (the Indian republic, the republic of the Spaniards), while free or enslaved Blacks were in the middle:[15] they did not have a republic and therefore had to become part of one of the two existing social structures, white or Indian. In the long succession from the era of colonial America, the republican period and nation-State ideologies, these ethnic polarizations were separated by the hegemonic hybridization of racial mixture, to the point that people began to speak of a universal race through the cultural transformation of Blacks into mulattoes and Indians into mestizos,[16] since they continued to bear the inferior and non-civilizing genetic burden in a sort of pigmentocratic order. This burden of "impurity" or non-Spanish or non-European purity is somewhat comparable to other cases of discrimination with heavy sociocultural burdens, such as discrimination against the Dalits in India or against the Burakumin in Japan.[17]

The constructivist approximation of identity and culture is particularly useful for deconstructing and exposing the machinations of the hegemonic elite. It combines the forms of counter-hegemonic criticism of the dominant ideologies and myths of pigmentocracy, "whitening", racial mixture and the denial of racial differences and inequalities.[18]

The communities of people of African descent in the Americas, albeit within diverse and locally specific contexts, pursue similar social and political interests and objectives based on a common African heritage, a common past and common struggle against enslavement, and a common experience of the Iberian colonialists and Europeans in general. They share a modern neocolonial reality and a present with strong trends towards globalization, which is unavoidable. Within the framework of these dynamic processes, integration strategies must be formulated in order to ensure the political, economic and social progress of the Afro-American community and of American societies as a whole.

The question that arises here is: If up to now the population of African descent has been looking towards others without turning to look at itself, what can be done to enable it to grow, have a presence, be visible and integrate - or rather "de-marginalize" - itself within the general framework of regional integration and globalization?

Any strategy aimed at solving these problems should take into account these two parallel dynamics, which include all societies and which are particularly advanced in our region: the processes of the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the integration of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean are resulting in an increasing exchange of "elites", an exchange in which communities of African descent are being marginalized, even as ordinary workers. In the face of such developments, States are not acting quickly enough to address the problem of marginalizations.

In the process of globalization, seen from a functional standpoint, economic forces are targeting societies and, certain groups within those societies, in order to integrate their economies and promote exchanges of production factors with different impacts and roles for each social group, depending on their ethnic origin.

In this context, the position of the various social groups has traditionally accounted for the white-mestizo-creole elite in Latin American and Caribbean countries. This elite acts as an intermediary in the negotiation of national resources in economic globalization processes, within which the conquest of the Americas could be considered a landmark event.

The communities of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, owing to the precariousness of their identity, poor organization and continuous search for assimilation within the pigmentocratic system imposed by the dominant Eurocentric elite, are, in general, socially immobile and silent. The majority and those who are active support projects that do not include them in their agenda as Afro-Americans. They continue to be invisible, with a very fragmented leadership both at the national and regional levels, even though in some countries Afro-Americans constitute the majority of the population.

In order to demythologize the "surreality of racial mixture", hybridization and racial equality imposed by Iberian colonialism and the strategy of denying racism in order to perpetuate a system of oppression and racial inequality, let us consider some practical examples based on the current operation of institutions in the region.

Any attempt to address the problem should take into account that measures undertaken by Governments or institutions are aimed at the apparent solution, or partial improvement, of inequalities at the macro-level, which are not reflected at the micro-level of everyday relations.[19] The historical experience of populations of African descent is generally very similar, with some local variations. Let us return to the case of Cuba as a paradigm for the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Although Cuba has a socialist Government that claims power for the people and takes measures to combat racism, racist attitudes persist to this day. In the current crisis, such attitudes have been powerful enough to enable whites to gain exclusive access to existing opportunities.[20]

The foregoing is included principally in the management plans of the State as the main enterprise/employer and in activities involving tourism and the acquisition of dollars, from which the Afro-Cuban population is for the most part excluded.[21] Similarly, the Afro-Cuban population accounts for the majority - 90 per cent - of the prison population (originally referred to as

"Blacks" in the article).[22] Other references compare Cuba with Brazil, in which the situation is allegedly one of the worst in Latin America, pointing out that there are proportionately fewer Blacks in positions of leadership in Cuba than in Brazil.[23] [24]

These are only two examples which, together with the examples of Colombia and Venezuela, demonstrate very clearly what may be called the miniaturization or minimization of the Afro-American majorities in four countries with the largest Afro-American populations in the region. This generalization about the invisibility of the Afro-American population in the ruling elites of the nations of the region could be applied to the overwhelming majority of the countries of the region.[25]

Colombia, which is currently experiencing an armed conflict, is a special case because it demonstrates [that Colombians of African descent suffer] disproportionately with respect to the rest of the country's population, in terms of the displacement, massacres, selective murders and internal displacement that take place each year. These citizens are persons who do not seem to receive adequate protection on the part of the State; it seems as if they had no State or that the State does not see them, or sees them only when it counts the dead, the displaced, the murdered or victims of massacres. Such persons seem to have an identity but to lack civil rights.

Continuing to consider the case of Cuba, in the early days of the Republic after Cuban independence, in which the majority of the combatants were Black, the latter attempted to assert their presence but were systematically excluded from the new armed forces of the State.[26]

Following the same logic, it would be interesting to examine a more general example at the regional level in a macro-scenario in order to consider this same trend. It is interesting to see the regional response of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Human Rights System, in such organizations as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights or the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, and to take stock of their activities during the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003), particularly with regard to relevant and effective action and measures to eliminate discrimination against Afro-American populations in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.[27] The same generalization could be made with respect to the offices of the specialized agencies of the United Nations in the region.

OAS, as a regional organization, in its efforts to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and on the initiative of such countries as Brazil and Peru, has been promoting activities with a view to drafting an inter-American convention against racism and racial discrimination. This academic exercise is, at best, a means of delaying, at the regional supermacro-level, the implementation of relevant and effective measures to combat racism and racial discrimination at the micro-level, using for this purpose existing human rights instruments of the Inter-American System and the United Nations, and even the constitutions of the countries of the region.[28] The legal assessment of the limited practical utility of the initiative has led analysts of the OAS Inter-American Juridical Committee to state in their report that the elaboration of such a convention "would divert resources from other, more effective, ways of addressing the problem".

Moreover, the OAS Inter-American Juridical Committee recommends the adoption of amendments to existing conventions, the adoption of interpretative declarations of such conventions and the drafting of additional protocols. It is also in favour of resorting to procedures of a political nature, such as those recommended by the First and Second Summits of the Americas. Other measures could be promoted by countries and civil society, or in forums such as the Ibero-American summits or such regional integration organizations as the North Atlantic Council, the Common Market of the Southern Cone and the Caribbean Community, to mention only a few.

It is often said about the region that the Governments are not like the peoples of their countries,[29] although there are some exceptions. In the case of OAS, that regional organization might as well be called the Organization for the Elite of American States, in other words, for the "non-Indians and non-Afro-Americans of American States" since, although there are many Afro-American heads of State in OAS, especially from the Caribbean and Central America, their formal presence is insignificant in terms of results and management because their institutional activities to date have not included visible action-oriented policies for the large population groups of African descent that have been subjected to permanent structural violence in most Latin American and Caribbean States.

The spirit and the letter of the Third World Conference against Racism in following up and monitoring the impact of measures should be taken into account when considering global and comprehensive solutions, since discrimination against Afro-Americans, at least where it has been sufficiently studied (United States of America) is partly independent or its dynamics is slower than macro-developments. Or, in other words, one is faced with a tremendous methodological challenge that requires comprehensive and coherent measures on the part of the same entities (United Nations and multilateral organizations, Governments and civil society).[30]

It is here that the role of such organizations as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations, OAS and the regional integration organizations is of paramount importance for ensuring that the integration of countries become a model for the integration of diversity, for "interculturality", and not only the integration of economic and social elites. Such integration will help to expand markets, increase the number of actors (producers and consumers) within markets, and promote political stability with the concomitant benefit of economic growth for the entire region within the framework of globalization. This will also circumscribe the areas in which organized crime can operate and help to reduce extreme poverty and terrorism. This should be the central objective of all the aforementioned entities and should be taken into account in all activities promoted by those institutions.

The appeal that is being made from this academic and social forum is to strengthen the identity and visibility of Afro-American groups in Latin America and the Caribbean since, in order to be recognized, one must have an identity. Diversity must be promoted, and the Governments, businesses, schools, social and human rights organizations of the countries of the region must resemble their people and reflect the composition of the population. This is a pattern of integration that takes account of all these political and economic realities.

In order to unify these efforts and establish networks and transnational social organizations for the promotion of inter-ethnic justice, participatory democracy in each of our countries must be encouraged.

In supporting such efforts in the preparatory meetings for the World Conference against Racism, representatives of NGOs have been clear with respect to the phenomenon of structural and systematic racism practised by State agencies when implementing public policies and investing for development. And not only by official bodies but also by non-governmental human rights organizations of international repute.

If one examines the factual evidence about the performance of the non-governmental sector and, specifically, the performance of organizations with a high regional and international human rights profile, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, or if we include such other official agencies as the United States State Department, their official reports on Latin America and the Caribbean reflect the "invisibility of the victims of racism", at least with respect to the Afro-American population. Various hypotheses can be put forward to explain this phenomenon; these include:

- The persons who prepare the reports of such organizations intentionally deny the existence of phenomenon of racism;

- There is a structural problem in the handling of information by the organizations mentioned as examples, in which Afro-American victims of various human rights violations and of violations of international humanitarian law are "not differentiated" or, to say the least, "are not seen" or are not "recognized". Perhaps because they work with secondary information generated by groups immersed "in the ocean of Latin American surreality".

These human rights organizations, in the same way that they report police abuses against the African-American population of the United States of America, or the number of African-Americans in United States jails, do not make any distinction in their treatment of such subjects when referring to Afro-American populations in Latin American and Caribbean countries. If the second hypothesis is considered to be more probable, this presupposes that the prevailing trend is for the States of the region to deny that discrimination and racism exist in Latin America and the Caribbean. The aforementioned human rights organizations are also "collaborating in such violations" through the involuntary omission of information.

With regard to the handling of information, I dare to suggest that reports produced by those organizations, at least all the reports that I have studied to date, reflect an omission or, to say the least, a "terrible ignorance" of, a total indifference to, or perhaps a lack of means of making an in-depth and detailed study of, the human rights situation of the Afro-American population as an important segment of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean. Reports issued by such organizations, as well as by States, should reflect the people about whom they are supposedly reporting. However, such reports tend to reflect the views of the ruling elite that violates the human rights of the large majority of the population.

It is therefore essential that, when reports concerning the violation of the human rights of migrants, women, children, refugees or displaced persons, or concerning massacres or selective murders, are prepared, a systematic distinction should be made for Latin America and the Caribbean. The reports should indicate which populations, in terms of ethnic differentiation and. selective impact, are being subjected to violations, and in what proportions. This approach should be included in all basic information so that sectoral problems can be identified and, on that basis, alternative proposals for making sectoral improvements can be put forward.

If the situation is not reported, it is not diagnosed ... it does not exist... and therefore ... persists.[31]

In this context, the right to communication, which involves both the possibility of establishing, in conditions of equality, civic interaction at various levels and the possibility of expressing individual opinions and the opinions of society, appears to be essential for the creation of a new global citizenry, both collective and individual.[32]

In general, the media and access to academic or official information, or information from NGOs, in large measure determine the power relations that take shape within the political space. Lack of access to information limits the participation and empowerment of groups subject to discrimination, and limits the viability of full democratic participation. This component includes: freedom of thought and opinion, free will and expression, which can be exercised only when flows of diversified and pluralist information makes possible the establishment of autonomous civic and public opinion groups with their own ideas.[33]

On the other hand, observing the internal dynamics of populations of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, one finds that, owing precisely to the fact that they have been subject to, and are an active participant in the construction of, this alienating ideology that "invisibilizes" their very existence, they do not have a solid organizational structure, are not conscious of their situation or lack the political power to force States to implement policies that ensure their effective integration and enjoyment of equal opportunities along with the rest of society.

It is at this point, when a population group has been subjected to such long-term structural violence that it has reached a state of unconsciousness, vulnerability, organizational weakness and inability to appropriate the instruments to which its citizenship entitles it, that the corrective, remedial and mediating role of a third actor can play a crucial role in improving the situation.

In such circumstances, the leadership and mediation of international and intergovernmental organizations and of the academic sector and civil society active in the region, are essential for the inclusion in the policies of their organizations in the region, instruments for cooperating directly with States and Afro-American communities in the formulation of projects to promote integration, effective civic action and the participation of all representatives of the population diversity of the Americas.[34] The situation of the Afro-American population within the Governments and States of the region should be the responsibility of the world's citizens.

In addition, declarations concerning racism made at political and economic hemispheric and inter-hemispheric meetings and forums, such as the Rio Group, the Ibero-American Summit or the Summit of the Americas, should include guidelines to enable the countries and existing integration organizations in the Americas to include in their activities anti-discrimination measures that target the situation and contain specific strategies for the effective "inclusion and integration" of the Afro-American population in order to arouse and activate this arm of the American body that has fallen asleep but which is essential if progress is to be made at the global level.

Here I should like to draw attention to this recommendation, since the situation of discrimination against the Afro-American population in the entire region is not clearly and forcefully mentioned in the political declarations of meetings of chairmen, inter-State organizations, economic integration organizations or in summits of the Americas. It would seem that the summits of the Americas were for certain Americans but not for Afro-Americans. This appeal has been made repeatedly by organizations of Afro-American civil society in the context of various meetings held in the region in preparation for the World Conference against Racism.

The Third World Conference against Racism was held, among other reasons, to examine the progress achieved in the struggle against racism, to assess the stumbling blocks hampering its progress, to examine mechanisms that would ensure better application of existing instruments and to examine factors leading to racism and racial discrimination. No regulatory tasks were required of the Conference.[35]

It became clear at the Conference, which was organized by the United Nations in cooperation with the people and Government of South Africa, that the international community agreed that the stumbling blocks hampering the complete elimination of "racial discrimination" and achieving equality for all "races" lay in the lack of the political will of States and the inadequacy of their anti-racist legislation, as well as the lack of implementation strategies and specific anti-racist actions (Declaration No. 77). Taking this approach, the specific recommendations that follow seek to incorporate those guidelines in keeping with the political, economic and sociocultural situation and realities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the structural and methodological constraints on the objective of combating the scourge of racism in the region, one cannot say that there is a magic formula for solving such a complex situation. However, with political will and an awareness of the lessons learned, with the illusion of being effective when implementing strategies, and recognizing the errors that have been made and, above all, acknowledging our lack of experience in this area, I should like to highlight some of the proposals which, in accordance with the views expressed, could be most effective in eradicating the scourge of racism in the region, incorporating the following key words as the driving force of the proposals: Partnership, Commitment, Follow-up, Monitoring and Accountability for the situation and the initiatives of all the actors involved, international organizations, Governments and civil society. It is a question of acknowledging realities: instead of denying them, States should endeavour to eradicate racial discrimination against the Afro-American population, maximizing opportunities and minimizing risks.

As a general framework, it should be reiterated that the proposal on the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action at the regional level should include pluralist and diverse thinking, through the promotion of mixed spaces for the collective achievement of consensus.

In this regard, the implementation of the Programme of Action and Declaration of the World Conference, which was the major event of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, is an opportunity for Latin American countries and societies, in which Governments must reflect the social composition of their peoples, to ensure the effective implementation of policies from top to bottom. Such policies should promote equal opportunities for all and should not be limited to the eradication of extreme poverty and political marginalization, or be fettered by racism and its institutional tool, racial discrimination.

The following recommendations have been advocated by NGOs and are part of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the Seminar on Populations of African Descent held in La Ceiba, Honduras.

1. Make the presence of communities of people of African descent and their organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean more visible, promoting their full participation in the region's social, cultural and political future;

2. Ensure equal access for the Afro-American population to all economic, social, political and cultural institutions and resources offered by the State, multilateral regional organizations and the international banking system;

3. Incorporate the gender and ethnic component in all these programmes;

4. Create official statistical information systems for development that incorporate the Afro-American ethnic component in all countries of the region;

5. Create a regional fund for the development of populations of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean;

6. Develop affirmative action programmes in all sectors, at the national and regional levels, and at the official level, and ensure that they are promoted and followed up at the level of private enterprise;

7. In each country of the region, there is a need to draft legislation that punishes racial discrimination and at the same time promotes measures that provide compensation to the victims of such practices, with the respective legislative modifications at the regional level in order to ensure that racial discrimination is punished at the supranational level when domestic remedies have been exhausted. This measure should include the preparation of special reports at the regional level;

8. Establish a regional institute for advocacy studies against racial discrimination, including a permanent working group attached to the institute and responsible for preparing special reports on the phenomenon;

9.   States are urged to ratify the treaties and conventions relating to the protection of human, economic, social and cultural rights and to adopt concrete measures at the regional level with a view to modifying existing and adopting additional legislation to ensure full coverage of the subject. This will enable Latin American and Caribbean citizens of African descent to assert their rights;

10.   Include an interdisciplinary advisory team composed of members of civic organizations of populations of African descent in all United Nations offices in Latin America and the Caribbean. This would be a practical way of implementing article 2, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities;

11.   The **United Nations Research Institute for Social Development** should initiate a specific research programme in coordination with Afro-American study centres at universities throughout the hemisphere and also some study centres outside the hemisphere, focusing on Latin American and Caribbean populations of African descent within a short-term priority agenda which should assist Governments, NGOs and academic centres in the study and formulation of proposals on public policy. Research and advocacy should be both local and regional and national and international and should deal with historical, sociological and cultural issues, both past and contemporary, relating to the presence of Africans and people of African descent on the American continent and in the Caribbean;

12.   The **Working Group on Minorities** should establish a database disaggregated by race/ethnicity, religion and descent, for all countries. The database should help to map and monitor discrimination in the areas of education, work, health, housing and so on. This initiative should involve the specialized agencies of the United Nations, since their participation will make it possible to cooperate with Governments in producing official statistics.

The Working Group should take steps to coordinate its activities with the specialized agencies of the United Nations and regional organizations, and include an interdisciplinary advisory team composed of members of civic organizations of populations of African descent in all United Nations offices in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Working Group should design and carry out distance learning and research programmes in cooperation with academic institutions of proven competence at the continental level, and with traditionally "Black" universities in the United States of America, with a view to publicizing and strengthening local development processes, broadening access of community and regional actors to information and technologies relating to development, and promote the establishment of regional networks for the management, execution and evaluation of projects.

Finally, the Working Group on Minorities should:

1. Follow up the resolutions of the Third World Conference against Racism;

2. Monitor the human rights of populations of African descent, coordinating with the specialized agencies with respect to the format of the information generated by each sector;

3. Promote affirmative action;

4. Follow up the implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives or government laws relating to the Afro-American population in each country;

5. Assess the impact of globalization on peoples of African descent, especially with respect to emigration problems;

6. Coordinate with such human rights organizations as Human Rights Watch, the Washington Office on Latin America or Amnesty International in order to ensure the routine inclusion of the population of African descent in the various reports prepared by such organizations.

Coordination with the Commission on Human Rights with a view to achieving the following objectives:

*   Establish a mission of immediate action in zones of conflict and armed uprisings, bearing in mind that people of African descent are constant victims of violence in such zones;

*   Request a special study by the representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons with a view to evaluating the case of Colombians of African descent;

*   Recommend that the special rapporteurs on arbitrary detention and on the question of torture, and other special mechanisms give special attention to the prison population of African descent, particularly to the disproportionate detention rates of people of African descent and the selection of suspects based on ethnic and racial profiling;

*   Hold in cooperation with NGOs of the region and with national Governments, within the next 12 months, an additional seminar with a view to conducting an in-depth study of the current situation of people of African descent on the American continent and in the Caribbean, broadening the approach and scope of proposals, promoting the integration of the various actors, Governments, NGOs and international organizations in a consensus-based programme, and laying the groundwork for the implementation of the proposals.

13.   The **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** should:

  - Urge States to include the variable "race/ethnic group" in their censuses and in all socio-demographic information produced or compiled by States for the United Nations;

  - Request States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to submit periodic reports in order to determine what sort of coverage, in terms of quality and quantity, the media give to matters relating to people of African descent. Special attention should be devoted to the presence and treatment of people of African descent in the media;

  - Request, as a matter of paramount importance, the States of the region that signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to make the declaration that enables the Committee to consider complaints by individuals or organizations concerning the violation of the Convention.

14.   The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** should:

  - Facilitate the production of documentary films on individual countries and on the Latin American and the Caribbean region as a whole, which reflect all aspects of the situation of the Afro-American population;

  - Hold a series of seminars, events or studies relating to the media and the Afro-American population and to the media and racial discrimination in the Americas;

  - Carry out a special research project and make recommendations on the educational situation of the Afro-American community on a country-by-country basis and for the region as a whole;

  - Conduct a study on the Afro-American cultural infrastructure and its impact in accordance with prevailing trends, as well as studies on cultural identity, culture, nation and racism at the national and subregional levels;

  - Urge the media, including the press, the electronic media, the Internet and advertising, bearing in mind their independence, and through their relevant associations and organizations at the national and regional levels, schools for training media representatives, and universities, to draft a code of ethics and self-regulatory measures, both as policies and practices in order to:

      (a)   Eliminate the discriminatory treatment of people of African descent and other groups, promoting a fair, balanced and equitable representation of the diversity of their societies;

(b)   Ensure that the diversity of their societies is reflected in their staff, which should include people of African descent and other groups, also seeking such diversity in their audience;

(c)   Halt the spread of ideas of racial superiority and the justification of racial hatred and all forms of discrimination, particularly on the Internet;

(d)   Hold seminars on violence, the media and the Afro-American population in countries of the region that are most affected by violence;

(e)   Special programme of grants for research on Afro-American culture for Latin America and the Caribbean.

15.   The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** should:

- Include special units for coordinating development programmes in UNDP country offices, which promote the incorporation of the development needs of populations of African descent into Governments' national development plans;

- Include the component "people of African descent" in all cooperation programmes in which UNDP participates with the countries of the region. It is very important to follow up government initiatives in this area;

- Include professionals of African descent in offices of the specialized agencies in the countries of the region in order to ensure adequate representation of the diversity and composition of the respective populations.

16.   The **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)** should:

- Urge States to obtain and take into account data on communities and populations of African descent in their projects on poverty eradication and promotion of development. Carry out a programme to eradicate extreme poverty, with special emphasis on the Afro-American population, through direct assistance, institutional capacity-building of communities and States, and with evaluation and follow-up;

- If discrimination is combated by addressing its socio-economic causes and by strengthening of democratic institutions that promote diversity, it will be possible to reduce poverty and extreme poverty. With a view to improving Governments and institutions, such initiatives could be submitted to the World Conference on Sustainable Development, which will be held in South Africa.

17.   **Other multilateral agencies** should include the perspective of ethnic group and gender in all their activities and ensure that all projects for communities and populations of African descent include the gender perspective.

The **Organization of American States (OAS)** should:

- Hold, in cooperation with the United Nations Working Group on Minorities, seminars for lawyers with a view to reforming and drafting measures to be carried out with ministries of justice to punish and criminalize racial discrimination, bearing in mind the inequalities faced by people of African descent;

- Support the initiatives of the Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations Working Group on Minorities in favour of populations of African descent;

- Assume leadership in the Americas by promoting the implementation of the Santiago Declaration and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

- Promote, among the Governments of the region, socio-economic and cultural policies that result in the recognition, integration and development of people of African descent within individual countries, devoting special attention to the implementation of policies that include populations of African descent and the diversity of our countries, in regional integration organizations and the multilateral banking system, particularly the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank;

- Promote Afro-American leadership through cooperation for the training of networks, sub-State organizations and subregional organizations at the level of integration agreements and regional organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean;

- Promote an exchange with Afro-American organizations of civil society in North America;

- Finance a special programme of grants for research on Afro-American populations, focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean.

The **Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Andean Community and the Central American Integration System (SICA)** should:

- Establish subregional working groups with a view to finding solutions for people of African descent in neighbouring countries;

- Include in their political agendas the results of the Santiago Conference and the Third World Conference against Racism, and ensure the participation of civil society in the process.

The **summit of Presidents of the Rio Group and the Ibero-American Summit** should:

- Include the topic of Afro-American populations as a basic element of poverty eradication programmes, and promote the development of communities and populations of African descent;

- Request the "Andrés Bello" Convention to include a special programme for the study and promotion of Afro-American culture in the countries to which the Convention applies.

Notes

[1] The term "person of African descent" is just beginning to be used to refer to Africans living in diaspora, particularly those who, as a result of the slave trade, were enslaved and taken to various parts of the world, especially the Americas. The term "person of African descent" is awkward because Africa is the cradle of humankind, and all human beings of any origin can therefore claim to be of African descent. With regard to the Africa-America connection, "Afro-American" has a more specific connotation within the general meaning of the term; it is not used in a restricted sense to refer to North Americans of African descent as "African-Americans", bearing in mind that the word "American" has traditionally, albeit incorrectly, been used to refer to the United States of America.

[2] It is important to draw attention to the idiosyncratic tendency of political leaders of the region to fill legal documents with a great deal of rhetoric and measures that seem to be more advanced and democratic than those taken in other parts of the world but which, in practice, remain empty words that have little effect on the everyday lives of the intended beneficiaries: the citizens of the region.

[3] The term "Black" and all related "pigmentocratic" vocabulary (the word "pigmentocratic" is used because it is in keeping with hierarchization on the basis of gradations of skin colour, which was characteristic of the period and which has continued to be applied to this day). As examples of such gradations of skin colour, the following are some of the most widely used terms in the Latin American and Caribbean region: *Negro, negrito, niche, zambo, moreno, trigueño, canela, café con leche, morocho, colorado, tercerón, culimocho, negro "pulido", negro "ordinario", negro tosco* and *prieto*. Many other words are in current use. I do not have a country-by-country list of such words; I refer here only to Colombian terms.

The invention of the word "black" is the direct effect of the European's subjugation and exploitation of Africans and peoples of other parts of the world. The word has become established at the superstructural and metadiscursive level of society as a "*truth*" validated by physical and cultural anthropology..

[4] At the time of writing of this article, I cannot recall which document first used this term. However, the term is in general use among activists for the Afro-Colombian cause.

[5] Makanaky, Gustavo. *Relatos del Pacífico: Secretos de una Cultura Renaciente* [Tales of the Pacific: Secrets of a Culture in Rebirth]. Working paper. Social Solidarity Network, Office of the President of the Republic. Luis Carlos Galán Institute for the Development of Democracy. Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia, 20 September 1999.

[6] It is important to bear in mind the irrational dimension of the myth, which is difficult to address because it is taken as an article of faith: it is not questioned. It is a matter of religious faith that no one dares to dispute for fear of being considered as having a serious psychological disturbance.

[7] Claire, Eau. "Interpersonal discrimination among Americans: Parallels and variation in micro-level racial inequality". University of Wisconsin. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 1 August 2000.

[8] This is an allusion to the psychosocial problem as a whole.

[9] Oxford English Dictionary, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 1646.

[10] De la Cadena, Marisol. "Reconstructing race, racism, culture and mestizaje in Latin America". NACLA Report on the Americas, May/June 2001.

[11] Ibid.

[12] It is important to emphasize that the declaration made by Latin American and Caribbean leaders of African descent from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at a meeting in San José, Costa Rica, held from 28 to 30 September 2000, and organized by the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights as part of the preparatory process for the Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, reflected their concern at the "invisibilization" and denial of discrimination against Latin Americans of African descent, a position that the States of the region maintained at a similar preparatory meeting held in Brasilia.

[13] This refers to the concept of the "step backwards", which was applied to those who "fell behind in the process of becoming white"; this is a figure of speech that has broad currency in anthropological works by Latin Americans and Caribbeans of African descent.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "Blacks" were in limbo: without a place in the social hierarchy and without a country, they were strangers in a strange land, without equal rights.

[16] Whitten, Norman, and Corr, Rachel. "Contesting the images of oppression: Indigenous views of Blackness in the Americas". NACLA Report on the Americas. May/June 2001, vol. 34, issue 6.

[17] Ishikawa, Yuka. "Buraku Liberation League, rights activists and rights violations: The Burakumin case in Japan". Global Conference against Racism and Caste-Based Discrimination, New Delhi, India, 1-4 March 2001.

[18] Edward, F. Fisher. "On the margin of the periphery:. Culture and race in Latin America and the Caribbean". *American Anthropologist*. Washington, March 1999.

[19] Ibid.

[20] De la Fuente, Alejandro. NACLA Report on the Americas. May/June 2001, vol. 34, issue 6.

[21] Márquez Linares, Claudia. "Un negro panorama: Cuba". Internet: http://www.fiu.edu/~fcf/blacpan.html.

[22] González Amaro, María de los Angeles. Fundación Elena Mederos, 16 January 2002. Internet: http://www.elenamederos.org/Opiniións/racism_cuba.html.

[23] A few relevant examples are cited in de Carvalho, Olavo, "Racismo aqui em Cuba", *Epoca*, 9 June 2001. Internet: www.olavodecarvalho.org/semana/raccuba.html.

[24] Guimarães, Antônio Sérgio. NACLA Report on the Americas. May/June 2001, vol. 34, issue 6.

[25] It is therefore important to carry out statistical and comparative studies of the Afro-American presence in the countries of the region and of their living conditions in general.

[26] Múñoz Kiel, Rosa, and Luerio Reyes, Marcel (students of social communication at Havana University), "Racismo vs. racismo".

[27] Forum of the Americas for Diversity and Plurality, 16-18 November 2000, preparatory meeting for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001.

[28] Paolillo, Felipe H. Report of the Inter-American Legal Committee: Drafting of an inter-American convention against racism and all forms of intolerance. OAS, 7 March 2002, sixtieth session, 25 February to 8 March 2002, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

[29] Kim, Howard (*AMNews* correspondent). 25 January 1999. "Managing diversity: New managed care rules propose cultural competency guidelines". Health. Amednews.com. the newspaper for America's physicians.

If we consider political participation and the implementation of public policies for citizens, a concept that has already been consolidated in the field of public health services is that of "cultural competency", or greater multicultural competency in the care of patients of different

cultural backgrounds. This condition of States could be more accurately called the **"cultural incompetency of the States of Latin America and the Caribbean"**. The leaders of the Governments that conduct such a policy could be similarly defined.

[30] Feagin, Joe R., and Sikes, Melvin P. *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience*. Beacon Press. Boston, 1994.

[31] One political leader of African descent referred to a statement that deals specifically with Colombia but which is applicable to the whole region: "The problem of Blacks in Colombia is not only that they discriminate against us. It is worse than that. They don't see us."

[32] Leon, Irene. "Pluralist and diverse approaches to the construction of an inclusive globalization". Latin American Information Agency (LAIA), conference held within the framework of the Andean Forum for Diversity and Pluralism, 16-18 November, in preparation for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001.

[33] Ibid., p. 3.

[34] This can be compared with cases of emergency room doctors who screen patients in order to rank them according to the seriousness of their condition. The person who complains the least is not given priority, even though it turns out that his condition is the most serious, since he doesn't even have the strength to complain.

[35] Paolillo, Felipe H., Report of the Inter-American Juridical Committee. Elaboration of a draft inter-American convention against racism and all forms of discrimination and intolerance. OAS, 7 March 2002. Sixtieth session, 25 February to 8 March 2002, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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9. Gonzalez Amaro, María de los Angéles, Fundación Elena Mederos, 16, 01, 2002. http://www.elenamederos.org/Opinións/racismo_cuba.html.

10. Algunos ejemplos al respecto estan menciónadas en: Racismo acqui em Cuba, Olavo de Carvalho, Epoca, 9 de junho de 2001. http:www.olavodecarvalho.org/semana/raccuba.html.

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