**Written Statement to the United Nations**

**Working Group of Experts on people of African descent**

**Civil Society Consultation 5 March 2021**

Madame Chair, members of the Working Group, fellow participants, I first acknowledge the importance of 2021 as the 20th anniversary of the *Durban Declaration and Plan of Action 2001*, which marked a milestone in addressing White supremacist colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism. We must hold UN member states accountable, for inadequate implementation of the *International Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination 1965.* Afriphobia/Afrophobia remains one of the commonest forms of discrimination in Europe, and results in intergenerational barriers to housing, health, education, and other universal human rights. However, only 15 EU state parties had implemented action plans to combat racism in 2019, leading to the EU’s launch of its *Anti-Racism Action Plan for 2020-2025*. In that regard, the following human rights concerns affecting African diaspora communities should be prioritised in 2021, calling to mind issues raised at the *26th and 27th Sessions of the UN WGEPAD*.

1. *A/HRC/45/44* articulates the urgency of addressing systemic racism in the form of Afrophobia/Afriphobia that marginalises and excludes members of the African diaspora globally from universal human rights. Notably inadequate access to health and wellbeing leads to disproportionately high mortality and morbidity rates in our communities. For example, 40% of those reporting discriminations in the EU reported unfair healthcare treatment in 2019. “In the United Kingdom, where the Office for National Statistics has found that women of African descent and men of African descent were respectively 4.3 and 4.2 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than white people, the largest disparity of any ethnic group.”
2. Reports from within Europe indicate the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequality and discrimination encountered by ethnic minorities. *A/HRC/45/44* highlights, “in the United Kingdom, Black and minority ethnic persons were 54 per cent more likely to be fined for violating lockdown. In Spain, 70 per cent of people of African descent surveyed reported being targeted by the police because of race.” Disproportionate institutionalised racism against people of African descent by law enforcement and others in the criminal justice system illustrates documented human rights violations, including police brutality in the USA which triggered global protests in 2020.

Moreover, the welfare of African diaspora individuals detained by border controls and law enforcement in the United States and other hotspots with high COVID-19 infection rates must be prioritised. People of African descent are disproportionately represented among both prison populations and those succumbing to the pandemic worldwide. For example, “in closed, overcrowded prisons and jails, basic protective measures, such as physical distancing and hygiene rules are virtually impossible to implement”.

1. The pandemic has exacerbated existing problems faced by African migrants and refugees, with those working as carers and in agriculture to maintain European society often experiencing more exclusion and hate speech. Social and economic as well as environmental equality for people of African descent globally is imperative and should consider the impacts of the pandemic and lockdown as well as Climate Crisis.

Establishing the **UN Permanent Forum for people of African descent** in 2021, can provide opportunities to develop structures and processes that advance thematic objectives of the *International Decade for people of African descent 2015 -2024* to address Afrophobia globally.

Recognition -Systemic racism is commonly ingrained in the policies and practices of institutions such as banks, schools, companies, government agencies and law enforcement. The Permanent Forum should provide political leadership that is inclusive and harness integrated intersectoral multilevel multi-stakeholder participation that adopts a participatory approach to address Afrophobia.

Justice - it must address inequalities faced by the African diaspora by developing policies that have transformative impact through systemic, structural, and institutional change - as part of a broader group of institutions and structures tackling Afrophobia.

Development – adopting a holistic approach to the UN’s *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* provides a framework for policy interventions by the public, private, and third sector to address Afrophobia; the African Union’s *Agenda 2063* facilitates participation of Africa’s Sixth Region, the African diaspora, in its development.

With this in mind, my recommendation for action to the UN WGEPAD is for greater cooperation and collaboration between UN organs including UNOHCHR and UNESCO, as well as with public bodies, UN member states, and civil society to:

* **deconstruct coloniality whilst working towards universality of access to human rights**, also recognising that local experiments will help the World move forward although major forums are a good thing*.* For example, the City of Bristol is making efforts to reduce disproportionate marginalisation of its African diaspora communities, in access to education, health and wellbeing, employment, and equality before the law. This employs *the 2030 Agenda* *for Sustainable Development* and the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals *(SDGs)* as a framework for policy interventions, for which the urbanism has received global accolades.
* **strengthen collaboration between organisations, cities, and countries,** sharing experiences, research and lessons learnt by being explicit about Afrophobia, sharing things that don’t work well as well as things that do work. In addition, advocates for systemic justice and reparatory justice should be adequately resourced to address aforementioned concerns. Notably*, SDG 16* Targets can be implemented to achieve inclusive sustainable development for peace, justice, and good governance.
* **support and set a common minimum standard of data collection that can facilitate global monitoring for better accountability,** in accordance with *SDG Target 17.18*. There is an urgent need to fill the data gap in Europe as well as elsewhere, including best practices and learning against racial discrimination including intersectionality with gender discrimination. For example, a UNESCO run observatory to collect data on Afrophobia could play an important role coordinating labour. Fully disaggregated equality data collection is imperative to address our concerns, as illustrated by the analysis of disproportionate COVID-19 morbidity and mortality rates for African diaspora communities in the USA and UK.