



POSITION PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Executive Summary

In May 2025, the creation of the People of African Descent Stakeholder Group (PAD SG) was officially recognized within the framework of the Coordination Mechanism of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS CM). This is a historic achievement for the population of global African descent, the result of collective coordination between organizations from all regions of the world committed to combating structural racism and promoting racial justice in multilateral sustainable development processes. The formalization of the PAD SG brings the voices of people of African descent into the participatory structures of the UN for the first time in an institutionalized manner, alongside other historically recognized groups such as women, youth, and Indigenous peoples.

The creation of the PAD SG represents not only the overcoming of an unacceptable omission in the multilateral system, but also the continuation of a legacy of struggle that has, in Durban 2001, the World Conference against Racism, one of its most significant milestones. It was in Durban that racism was recognized as structural, systemic, and global, and that the reparations agenda was brought to international debate. More than two decades later, the PAD SG emerges as a permanent institutional mechanism aimed at ensuring that the commitments made in Durban are effectively implemented within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, the Pact for the Future, and the financing agendas for development, among others.

This new arrangement coincides with the end of the First International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) and the beginning of its institutional continuity with the Second International Decade (2025–2034), recently proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly. Although the first decade has driven important advances in the demands of the African descent population, its goals of recognition, justice, and development remain largely unfulfilled. The creation of the People of African Descent Stakeholder Group (PAD SG) is directly aligned with the spirit and renewed goals of this new Decade, representing a concrete response to the historical omission of the African descent population in UN participation mechanisms. The PAD SG thus assumes a strategic role of political,

methodological, and institutional continuity, ensuring that the rights, knowledge, experiences, and contributions of people of African descent remain a permanent, cross-cutting, and structuring agenda in the global architecture of sustainable development.

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being

People of African descent in different parts of the world live in conditions of extreme inequality that deteriorate their health and face persistent barriers to full access to health and well-being. These barriers include institutional racism in health systems, discrimination in care, neglect in biomedical research, and a lack of data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, territory, and gender. Obstetric violence is a recurring reality in several countries, and preventable maternal mortality rates among women of African descent remain disproportionately high in contexts as diverse as Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, and regions of the African continent. African descent populations also face inequalities in access to reproductive health, primary care, mental health, and basic sanitation services.

The impact of racism on the mental health of people of African descent is profound and structural. The daily experience of racial discrimination, institutional exclusion, state violence, and social marginalization results in high rates of psychological distress, toxic stress, and disorders such as anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion. In many African descent communities, especially among young people and women, mental health is affected by the constant struggle for survival, unresolved collective grief, and lack of access to culturally appropriate psychosocial care services.

This exclusion is intensified by the impacts of the climate crisis, which disproportionately affect African descent communities in precarious urban areas, coastal regions, rural areas, traditional communities, and peripheral territories. The increase in infectious diseases exacerbated by environmental degradation, exposure to pollution, and the lack of resilient infrastructure increases the health risks for these populations. The cumulative effects of the environmental crisis and historical neglect of health systems deepen racial inequality and endanger the lives of millions of people of African descent.

The health of the African descent population worldwide faces specific challenges that require attention under SDG 3. Diseases such as sickle cell disease, which is significantly more prevalent among African descent people, impose severe limitations on the quality of life and lead to death due to a lack of full access to healthcare caused by racism. Studies also

indicate a higher incidence of cardiovascular disease in this population, resulting from social determinants and barriers to access to prevention and treatment services. In addition, scientific research shows that uterine fibroids are more frequent and more severe among African descent women, with important implications for reproductive health. Public policies that are sensitive to these specificities are fundamental to promoting health equity.

To address the intersection between health and human rights, it is necessary to listen to young people, not only as beneficiaries, but as leaders and experts in their own experiences. Working to create platforms for political education, community climate action, and the valorization of narratives, so that they can express how climate injustice affects their rights and their daily realities.

The absence of integrated, territorialized, intersectional, and anti-racist care policies directly compromises the achievement of SDG 3. The disregard of racism as a social determinant of health in national and global plans perpetuates invisibility and the omission of effective responses. The review of the SDGs in 2025 represents a decisive opportunity to correct this scenario and affirm the full and integral right to health, with availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality, as an unwavering commitment to dignity and racial justice. Such a commitment is in line with the obligations assumed by the signatory states of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, which recognizes the right of every person to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health.

The achievement of SDG 3 remains out of reach for African descent communities, who face multiple forms of systemic exclusion, including limited access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. In contexts of socioeconomic marginalization, the absence of effective public policies and social protection can lead young people to become vulnerable to illicit economies, exacerbating issues such as mental health struggles, violence, and selective criminalization. Punitive drug policies, combined with structural racism and stigmatizing media portrayals, reinforce cycles of poverty and incarceration. Furthermore, linguistic and institutional barriers limit these communities' access to information, civic participation, and international human rights systems, deepening inequalities in the right to comprehensive and dignified health.

We therefore demand:

- Inclusion of racism as a social determinant of health in national reports, global indicators, and SDG 3 monitoring mechanisms;

- Funding for public affirmative action policies, focusing on the specific health needs of the African descent population, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, community care, primary care, and violence prevention;
- Investment in data systems disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, territory, and socioeconomic status, with the participation of African descent communities in defining priorities;
- Integration of socio-environmental and climate justice into the health agenda, recognizing the unequal impacts of the climate crisis on the lives and bodies of people of African descent.
- Initiatives to strengthen and train technical and customer service teams in racial literacy and nonviolent communication to incorporate inclusive practices into the Code of Conduct for humanized health care facilities.

The implementation of SDG 3 among African descent populations requires a concrete political commitment to the right to health as part of a broader project of historical reparation, environmental justice, and well-being.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

People of African descent, especially cis and trans women and girls, face multiple forms of oppression globally, which manifest themselves in high rates of gender-based and racial violence, neglect in sexual and reproductive health, limited access to quality education, overlap in informal and precarious sectors of work, and underrepresentation in spaces of power and decision-making. This reality highlights the urgency of measures that recognize and address these inequalities in a structural, coordinated, and intersectional manner.

The invisibility of women of African descent is the result of a historical construction of dehumanization and exclusion that reinforces colonial power structures, privileging hegemonic groups and relegating others to systemic marginalization. This exclusion is not only social but also political and institutional, as demonstrated by their absence in data, public policies, and governance bodies. It can also be reflected in the ranks of the United Nations itself, considering that African descent women and non-white women in general tend to be disproportionately represented in the highest positions of the organization. This reality highlights the relevance of the newly formed Anti-Racism Office (ARO) of the United Nations Secretariat in promoting data collection and recruitment policies that center gender and race intersectionality in the composition of UN's staff.

The economic empowerment of women of African descent must be central to this agenda, not only as a tool for political emancipation but also as a mechanism for historical reparation and effective access to rights. This commitment must be reflected in international debates on the reform of the global financial architecture, currently underway within the Financing for Development (FfD) process, ensuring that international financial flows are guided by economic, racial, and gender justice. Similarly, the UN's institutional review processes should incorporate the perspective of women of African descent across the board, ensuring that the structural reforms under discussion - whether in governance, mandate implementation, or programmatic realignment - promote power redistribution, intersectional representation, and substantive inclusion in multilateral spaces. So that the voices of young people of African descent, especially women and girls, are not only present but central to decisions.

We therefore demand:

- Incorporation of race, ethnicity, and territory into the targets and indicators of SDG 5, ensuring that gender equality policies take into account the specific experiences of women of African descent;
- Recognizing the economic empowerment of women of African descent as a strategy for historical reparation, promoting reforms that ensure decent working conditions, equal pay, and equitable access to economic and financing opportunities;
- Implementation of public policies that address intergenerational poverty, ensuring access to quality education, comprehensive health care, and social protection systems that address gender and race inequalities in an interdependent manner;
- Promoting the full political participation of women of African descent in decision-making and governance spaces, strengthening their presence in national and international forums that define the direction of public policies and development agendas, including through intersectional data collection and an inclusive recruitment process applied to the UN's highest positions and staff.

The achievement of SDG 5 requires a concrete political commitment to gender and racial justice, recognizing the contributions, voices, and knowledge of women of African descent as essential for sustainable development and the democratic transformation of societies.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

People of African descent, especially women and young people, face persistent structural barriers to accessing decent work and economic opportunities. These barriers include racism and sexism in hiring processes, occupational segregation, unequal wages, exclusion from credit and financing systems, and an overrepresentation in informal, precarious jobs without social protection. These economic inequalities are not deviations from the system: they are structural parts of a global economy that still operates based on colonial legacies and structural racism.

The transition to new economic paradigms, often referred to as the “green economy,” has been presented as a solution to the climate crisis and the future of work. However, this transition often ignores the historical and structural inequalities that affect marginalized communities, especially those of African descent. When deprived of redistributive justice, popular participation, and recognition of historical debt, this so-called “green economy” risks reproducing the same logic of exploitation, expropriation, and exclusion that sustained the fossil fuel economy.

A just transition, therefore, cannot be merely technological or sectoral. It must be deeply anti-racist, feminist, and territorialized, placing at its center the knowledge, practices, and experiences of African descent communities that have historically sustained ways of life based on care, collectivity, and real sustainability. Decent work must be understood as part of a project of reparative and economic justice, social reconstruction, and redistribution of power, rather than as passive adaptation to changing markets.

De modo que os agentes institucionais do Sistema das Nações Unidas compreendam as lacunas raciais historicamente presentes nos espaços globais, reconhecendo como essas ausências impactam diretamente a comunidade afrodescendente e contribuem para o aprofundamento de desigualdades e retrocessos, especialmente diante da exclusão de vozes juvenis diversas e plurais.

We therefore demand:

- Inclusion of race, gender, and territory criteria in the SDG 8 targets and indicators, ensuring that labor and economic growth policies take into account the structural inequalities that impact African descent populations.
- Funding for public policies with an intersectional approach, focusing on the creation of decent work, strengthening the popular and solidarity economy, access to credit and land, encouraging cooperativism, and valuing care as an economic dimension.

- Programs and policies to encourage qualified professional training and safe and qualified entrepreneurship, including tax and economic incentives for women of African descent, especially in territories of greater social and economic vulnerability.
- Criticism and reorientation of economic transition agendas, denouncing corporate capture of the climate agenda and demanding a just transition that is redistributive, pluralistic, and rooted in racialized territories.
- Inclusion of African descent communities in decision-making spaces on global economic policies, such as the G20, BRICS, the UN Tax Convention, and the Financing for Development (FfD) process, with formal mechanisms for consultation and effective participation.
- Investment in data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, territory, and class, with the participation of African descent communities in defining priorities and evaluating public policies.

The implementation of SDG 8 among African descent populations requires clear political commitments to wealth redistribution, the valorization of work in all its forms, and the overcoming of structures that racialize the global economy. Without economic justice, there is no decent work. Without reparations, there is no sustainable development.

SDG 14 – Life Below Water

Traditional African descent communities play an essential role in protecting and preserving marine and coastal ecosystems, even though they have historically been excluded from public policies on environmental management and territorial development. Riverside quilombola communities, shellfish gatherers, artisanal fisherfolk, terreiro peoples, and coastal dwellers have built sustainable ways of living with the waters for generations, based on ancestral knowledge, community practices, and spirituality.

However, these communities are constantly threatened by large logistics, tourism, industrial, and energy projects such as ports, petrochemical complexes, offshore wind farms, and monocultures that destroy biomes, restrict access to territory, and violate fundamental rights. The expansion of the so-called “blue economy” in the corporate and commercialized forms currently promoted reinforces the cycle of exploitation, environmental racism, and expropriation of traditional coastal territories.

The implementation of SDG 14 requires recognition of the central role of African descent communities in protecting marine life and using ancestral and traditional technologies, which directly impact the definition of paths to water and ocean sustainability. Without the full participation of these populations, SDG 14 will continue to be implemented in an exclusionary manner, with adverse impacts on those who have historically cared for the waters with practices of respect and reciprocity.

We therefore demand:

- Recognition of the territorial, cultural, and spiritual rights of traditional African descent communities living in coastal areas and directly dependent on aquatic ecosystems for their survival, identity, and well-being;
- Formal inclusion of these communities in environmental governance processes, with decision-making participation in the development of public policies, management plans, and water and marine resource management;
- Guarantee of the right to free, prior, and informed consultation whenever projects, laws, or policies may directly or indirectly affect the ways of life, territories, and ecosystems of these communities, as established by ILO Convention 169 and other international collective rights frameworks;
- Suspension of blue economy projects and policies that promote the privatization, militarization, or financialization of the oceans without assessing their racial and environmental impact and without dialogue with the affected populations;
- The valorization of traditional African descent knowledge as legitimate social and environmental technologies, recognizing the spirituality of water as the foundation of the worldview and collective rights of African descent people and communities;
- Investment in environmental data systems disaggregated by territory, race, gender, and class, with community participation in monitoring and priority setting.

The waters that feed marine life also sustain ancestral ways of life that continue to be threatened by projects that prioritize profit and economic growth at the expense of the right to land, territory, and a dignified life. Defending SDG 14 from the perspective of African descent communities means affirming that the protection of the oceans necessarily involves territorial, environmental, and racial justice, guided by the principle of self-determination and free, prior, and informed consultation. There is no life in the water without dignity on the shores.

SDG 17 – Partnerships and Means of Implementation

SDG 17 proposes strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. For African descent populations, this goal will only be effective if it is guided by principles of historical justice, redistribution of power, and equity in global decision-making. Addressing structural inequalities inherited from colonialism and slavery must be understood as an essential condition for fair partnerships, especially among countries in the Global South, where the largest portions of the African diaspora live.

The current scenario of geopolitical reorganization - with greater prominence for countries of the Global South in mechanisms such as BRICS, G77, and G20 - opens a strategic window to reposition the debate on reparative justice, economic sovereignty, international cooperation based on equity, and financing mechanisms, including climate financing, that respond to the needs of historically marginalized peoples. In this context, strengthening South-South alliances is central to advancing a development agenda focused on rights, sustainability, and reparation.

The creation of the People of African Descent Stakeholder Group in the United Nations system in 2025 represents a historic step in the democratization of global participation mechanisms. For the first time, African descent voices are institutionally integrated into the participatory structures of the UN, paving the way for the defense of more inclusive, plural, and intersectional multilateral governance.

It is urgent to recognize that African descent communities around the world are already developing concrete and sustainable development practices that respond to the SDGs based on their territories and realities. These social technologies, based on solidarity, ancestry, care, and community justice, directly address the challenges of poverty, food insecurity, the environmental crisis, and economic exclusion. The recognition and financing of these experiences are fundamental to overcoming the difficulty of territorializing the 2030 Agenda and ensuring that solutions already existing in the territories can be made visible, strengthened, and scaled up.

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