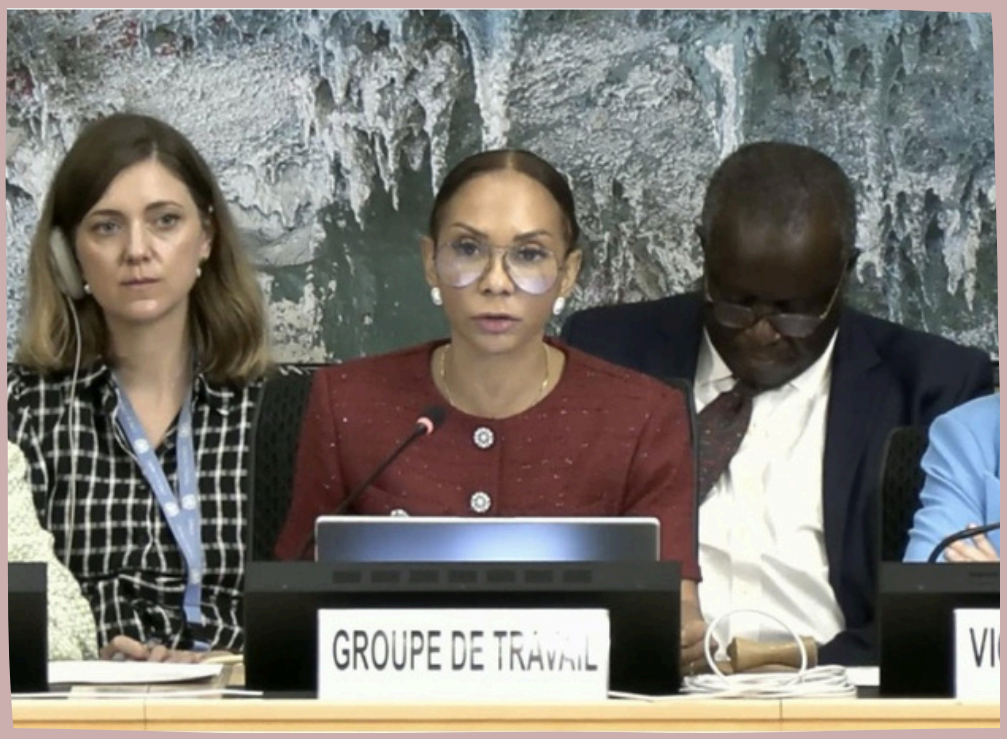
Geneva International Centre for Justice

63rd Session of the Human Rights Council

FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS OF AFRICAN DESCENDANTS



By Pascale Portman / GICJ

October 2026

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I. Executive Summary

On 30 September 2026, at the 33rd and 34th meetings of the 63rd session of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Isabelle Mamadou, Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (hereinafter, "the Working Group"), presented the thematic report entitled "Crossings and journeys: people of African descent in global migration and the enduring architecture of racialization" (*A/HRC/63/74*), alongside the reports on the official visits of the Working Group to the Republic of Suriname (*A/HRC/63/74/Add.1*) and the United Mexican States (*A/HRC/63/74/Add.2*). The thematic report, drawn up through consultations with member states, experts, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders, examined how racial hierarchies rooted in enslavement and colonialism continued to shape human mobility. The Working Group found that precarity in migration is not accidental but the result of policy choices, and that racial profiling, detention, deportation and the unregulated use of artificial intelligence (AI) at borders disproportionately affects Africans and people of African descent on the move. In this context, the Working Group stressed that regularisation should be regarded not as an exception or a privilege, but as an essential means of correcting systems that themselves produce irregularity. It therefore called for migration governance grounded in human rights, dignity and racial justice.

The presentation of the reports was followed by an Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group. The representative of Mexico, as a concerned country, recalled the constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexican peoples and its willingness to continue working to ensure that people of African descent could fully enjoy their human rights on an equal footing and free from discrimination. However, she regretted that some of the agreed meetings, which would have provided the context and details needed for a comprehensive assessment of the national situation, had not taken place owing to what she described as logistical errors on the part of the Working Group. The representative of Suriname thanked the Working Group for its transparent and critical reporting. She highlighted national institutions' cooperation with the Working Group and acknowledged that environmental legislation and the implementation of Inter-American Court judgments remained works in progress, while welcoming the report's attention to non-compliance and noting the Government's revived national dialogue on the matter.

Representatives of other member states, groups of States, international organisations and CSOs participating in the dialogue largely welcomed the work and findings of the Working Group. Most delegations shared their concern about the racial discrimination faced by

Africans and people of African descent in the context of migration, and many recalled the historical roots of these injustices. While reaffirming their commitment to combating racism, some States also highlighted the importance of effective border management. Overall, delegations expressed broad support for the mandate of the Working Group and for rights-based approaches to migration governance.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Mamadou urged states to treat migrants as rights holders rather than as data and to prohibit the use of race as a basis for suspicion. She also called on states to strengthen their cooperation with the Working Group, whose mandate was due for renewal during the session.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) welcomes the report of the Working Group, which exposes the enduring architecture of racialisation in global migration governance and the grave abuses it produces at every stage of the migration journey. GICJ is deeply concerned that the externalisation of border control, punitive deportation practices and the deployment of AI without adequate safeguards continue to deny Africans and people of African descent their dignity and fundamental rights. Accordingly, it calls on member states to implement the recommendations of the Working Group, to expand safe and regular migration pathways, to ratify the relevant international instruments and to subject border technologies to binding human rights safeguards. It urges Mexico to end racial profiling in practice through binding protocols and independent oversight, and to ensure an impartial investigation into the killing of the human rights defender Mr. Sael Silva Cisneros.

II. Background

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (the Working Group) reports annually to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolutions A/HRC/RES/9/14 and A/HRC/RES/54/26. Its work is framed by the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, whose 25th anniversary was commemorated in 2026, and by the Second International Decade for People of African Descent (2025–2034). Ms. Isabelle Mamadou was elected Chair of the Working Group on 8 December 2025, succeeding Ms. Bina D'Costa. The Working Group dedicated its 37th session, held in Geneva from 11 to 13 November 2025, to the theme of people of African descent in global migration. At its 38th session, held in April 2026, it held panel discussions with the participation of representatives of member states, international organisations, regional organisations, CSOs and academia. The land rights of people of African descent will be the focus of its 39th session in November 2026.

The choice of migration as a thematic focus reflected a growing concern. For many Africans and people of African descent, the migration journey has become an encounter with systemic and often violent racial discrimination at every stage, from departure and transit to border crossing and return. The legacies of enslavement and colonialism have produced exclusion and marginalisation that act as powerful drivers of migration. At the same time, the lack of safe and legal pathways have compelled many to rely on increasingly dangerous routes, where they are exposed to racial profiling, exploitation by smugglers and traffickers, and violent operations by security forces. Women and girls of African descent face a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence during transit and in detention. According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 40 million people of African descent live as international migrants, while Africans account for 36 per cent of identified trafficking victims and 46 per cent of unaccompanied trafficked children.

In the United Mexican states, the presence of people of African descent dates back to 1518. Between 300,000 and 500,000 enslaved Africans were trafficked into the country by 1810. Despite their decisive contribution to the nation, embodied by figures such as Gaspar Yanga, who escaped enslavement and founded the town that bears his name, and Vicente Guerrero, the independence leader who abolished slavery, post-independence narratives of a mestizo national identity largely erased African heritage from public memory. Mexico only recognised Afro-Mexican peoples in its Constitution in 2019, a recognition strengthened by a constitutional reform in 2024. In the 2020 census, 2,576,213 persons, about two per cent of the population, were identified as Black, Afro-Mexican or Afro-descendant. However, only 22 of the 32 federative entities have incorporated this constitutional recognition, and only seven state anti-discrimination laws expressly recognise race as a protected category.

The situation in the Republic of Suriname is deeply rooted in its colonial history. Enslaved Africans were first brought to the territory by British planters in 1651, before the colony was ceded to the Dutch Republic under the Treaty of Breda in 1667. By the 18th century, Suriname had become one of the most profitable sugar colonies in the world, yet also one of the most lethal for the enslaved. Slavery was formally abolished on 1 July 1863, but only ended in practice in 1873 after a mandatory transition period. Escaped enslaved Africans formed the Maroon communities in the interior, whose autonomy the Dutch colonial government recognised through peace treaties in the 18th century. The descendants of those who remained within the colonial social structure until emancipation, known as Creoles, settled largely in urban and coastal areas and played a central role in the political and

administrative development of the Surinamese State. Today, Maroons and Creoles together account for roughly 37.4 per cent of the population. In the 1960s, the construction of the Afobaka Dam flooded around 1,500 square kilometres of Saramaka ancestral territory and displaced more than 6,000 people. Although the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered Suriname to recognise the collective land rights of Maroon communities in Moiwana Community v. Suriname (2005) and Saramaka People v. Suriname (2007), these judgments have yet to be implemented.

III. Summary of the Experts' Report

The thematic report of the Working Group (A/HRC/63/74) concluded that contemporary migration governance carried echoes of racially discriminatory and colonial legacies. Violent border regimes and precarious migration pathways were found to reproduce global inequalities and denied Africans and people of African descent their fundamental rights. The Working Group stressed that precarity in migration was not accidental but the result of policy choices. It observed a global hierarchy of mobility, in which some were welcomed as "expatriates" or as "circulation of talent", while others were treated as "migrants" or as a "crisis to be managed".

The report further identified structural drivers that deepened this vulnerability. Temporary labour migration programmes often reduced migrants to commodities in racialised supply chains, while externalisation arrangements framed as "partnerships" reflected unequal power relations between Northern states and countries of origin and transit. Artificial intelligence (AI) and biometric systems deployed without adequate safeguards can exacerbate discrimination, and so-called smart borders push migrants onto longer and deadlier routes. The Working Group also found that deportation had become a coercive and punitive instrument, often preceded by prolonged detention, and that removal should never be treated as the default option. In its view, reparations, decolonisation and self-determination are indispensable elements to address the root causes of irregular migration.

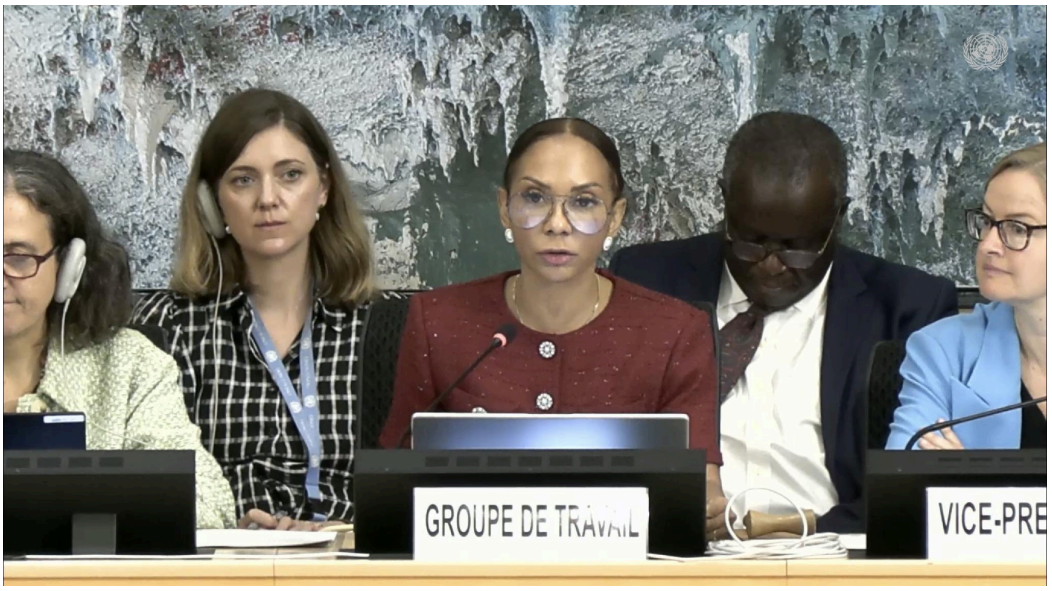
To address these challenges, the Working Group recommended that member states end transactional externalisation practices and open safe and regular pathways that do not tie workers to a single employer. It also called for legal firewalls between immigration enforcement and public services, clear legal bases for border technologies, and a shift from punitive removal to regularisation.

The report on the visit to the Republic of Suriname (A/HRC/63/74/Add.1) found that people of African descent, although the largest population group, continued to lag behind in most socio-economic indicators. Districts in the interior inhabited mostly by Maroon communities received significantly less State support and lacked adequate health, education and water infrastructure. The Working Group expressed great concern at the withdrawal of the Bill on the Collective Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. It also highlighted the overrepresentation of Afro-Surinamese men and boys in detention, reprisals against land rights activists, and the disregard for free, prior and informed consent in mining concessions. It recommended that Suriname fully implement the judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and adopt a comprehensive law against racial discrimination.

The report on the visit to the United Mexican states (A/HRC/63/74/Add.2) welcomed the constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexican peoples, but regretted that they were often subsumed within institutions designed for Indigenous Peoples. The Working Group received testimonies of racial profiling and arbitrary detention, including cases in which Afro-Mexicans were required to sing the national anthem to prove their nationality. It also highlighted obstetric violence rooted in racial stereotypes, racist bullying and barriers affecting Afro-descendant children in education. Accordingly, it recommended that Mexico adopt a national plan of action for people of African descent, prohibit racial profiling through binding protocols, and adopt a national strategy on memory, truth and reparations.

IV. Exhaustive Summary of the Interactive Dialogue

1. Opening Remarks by the Chair of the Working Group



In her opening remarks, Ms. Isabelle Mamadou, Chair of the Working Group, outlined the activities of the mandate since its last report to the Council. She recalled that the Working Group had held its 37th and 38th sessions in Geneva, which addressed migration and human mobility, the 25th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and recent developments in the global reparatory justice agenda. She added that an expert consultation on the land rights of people of African descent had laid the groundwork for the 39th session in November 2026. Throughout the year, the Working Group had worked to promote the Second International Decade for People of African Descent and to strengthen cooperation with the other United Nations anti-racism mechanisms.

Turning to the thematic report, Ms. Mamadou explained that the contributions received during the consultations had revealed how deeply racial hierarchies continued to shape the freedom to move. She warned that racism increased the vulnerability of people on the move to trafficking, denial of protection and abuse, and that digital surveillance at borders risked deepening rather than reducing inequality. Deportation, she noted, could strip migrants of their possessions, wages and dignity, separate families and cause lasting trauma. Humanising migration, she argued, meant confronting the violence that determines whose suffering counts and whose does not. She therefore urged states to recognise that the legacies of enslavement and colonialism continued to shape the experiences of Afro-descendant migrants, to include migration in reparatory justice efforts, and to guarantee access to healthcare, education and

justice without fear of arrest. She also called for special attention to women and girls along migration routes and for transparent and accountable safeguards on the use of AI at borders.

Presenting the findings of the visit to Suriname, she thanked the Government for its cooperation and welcomed its efforts to advance reparatory justice and to establish an independent national human rights institution. However, she described land rights as one of the greatest challenges, since the collective rights of Maroon communities still lacked legal recognition and mining and logging continued on their territories without consent. She also pointed to deforestation and river pollution caused by gold mining, inequalities in access to services in the interior, and the overrepresentation of Afro-Surinamese men and boys in detention. She expressed particular concern for children, citing early pregnancies among girls as young as 12 or 13 and the exclusion of Rastafari pupils from school because of their locks. Calling on Suriname to "move from commitment to action", she recommended guaranteeing free, prior and informed consent, adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and introducing comprehensive sexual education.

Ms. Mamadou then presented the findings of the visit to Mexico, which had taken the Working Group to Mexico City, Veracruz, Guerrero and Oaxaca. While acknowledging the progress achieved since the constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexican peoples in 2019, she stressed that this recognition had yet to translate into the effective enjoyment of rights, particularly in political participation, access to justice and asylum. She denounced the persistent association between Blackness and foreignness, which exposed Afro-Mexicans to arbitrary detention and migration checks. She also expressed concern about families facing harassment and the risk of eviction in the context of gentrification and about rising violence against human rights defenders and other groups. Before concluding, she paid tribute to Mr Sael Silva Cisneros, an Afro-Mexican lawyer and human rights defender whom the delegation had met during the visit and who was killed only weeks later in Guerrero. She called for a thorough and impartial investigation into his killing. Finally, she recommended that Mexico ensures legitimate representation of Afro-Mexican peoples, combat racial profiling, protect communities from forced evictions and adopt a national strategy on memory, truth and reparations.

2. Statement by the United Mexican States as the Concerned Country



The representative of the United Mexican States welcomed the presentation of the Working Group and acknowledged its work to give visibility to the challenges faced by people of African descent. Recalling Mexico's long-standing policy of openness to international scrutiny, the representative stressed that dialogue and cooperation with human rights mechanisms were essential to strengthening public policy. The delegation then commented on the process that had led to the report. The Government had made significant institutional efforts to meet the requests of the Working Group, arranging meetings with institutions across all three branches of power and at all levels of government. However, the representative regretted that some of the agreed meetings had not taken place as a consequence of logistical errors attributed to the Working Group. In Mexico's view, these meetings would have provided the context needed for a more objective and balanced assessment. While valuing the perspectives of the civil society and Afro-Mexican communities, the representative emphasised that dialogue with national institutions was an equally important source of information on the legal framework and public policies in place.

Mexico took note of the recommendations and stated that their follow-up would require the participation of the relevant authorities at all levels of government, in cooperation with civil society and Afro-Mexican communities. The representative highlighted the progress already achieved, including the constitutional recognition of Afro-Mexican peoples as part of the pluricultural composition of the nation and the strengthening of policies to combat discrimination and historical inequalities. The Government asserted that it would continue to develop secondary legislation to give full effect to these constitutional provisions.

Acknowledging that ongoing challenges remained and that substantive equality required sustained efforts, Mexico reaffirmed its readiness to work constructively with the Working Group. It called for future interactions to be based on reciprocal cooperation, ensuring dialogue with communities, the civil society and the institutions responsible for implementing public policies.

3. Statement by the Republic of Suriname as the Concerned Country



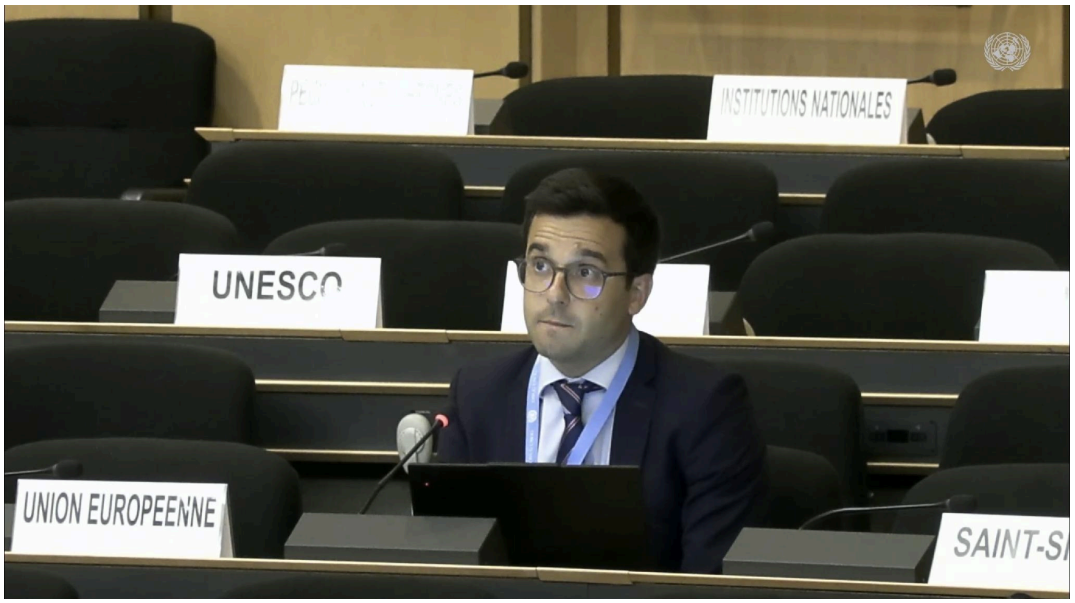
The representative of the Republic of Suriname thanked the Working Group for its visit and its detailed report. Opening with the words “rather to waste than to surrender”, the representative recalled Boni, the Maroon leader who in 1765 led the freedom movement of enslaved people who had fled the plantations. Boni, it was emphasised, should be remembered as a freedom fighter rather than a guerrilla, as colonial history books had misleadingly portrayed him. The representative explained that the Maroons had come to be regarded as tribal communities alongside Indigenous Peoples, while the descendants of the enslaved were commonly called Creoles, although urbanisation had blurred this distinction. Since slavery was abolished later in Suriname than elsewhere, indentured labourers from Indonesia and British India were brought to the plantations, shaping a diverse society in which different groups coexisted peacefully.

Conveying feedback from the capital, the representative stated that the General Bureau of Statistics had provided the Working Group with data, including the 2024 Population and Housing Census. The representative acknowledged that strengthening environmental legislation and institutional capacity to address mining pollution and climate change remained

a work in progress, and requested that the name of the Central Penitentiary Institution be corrected in the report. With regard to the judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the representative admitted that their implementation had at times been politicised. She expressed hope that the Working Group's findings on non-compliance would prompt policymakers to act, noting that the current Government had already revived the national dialogue on compliance. Suriname concluded by welcoming the transparent and critical reporting of the Working Group and committed to drawing on its recommendations to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Maroons and to strengthen the rights of people of African descent.

4. Statements on behalf of Groups of States

The European Union (EU)



The representative of the European Union (EU) thanked the Working Group for its report and reaffirmed the EU's commitment to combating all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and to promoting pluralism, non-discrimination, justice and equality. This commitment, the representative stated, extended to migration governance in line with national competences, including the protection of the rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, the right to seek asylum and respect for the principle of non-refoulement. The representative stressed that migration management had to go hand in hand with respect for the rights of all migrants without discrimination, including Africans and people of African descent.

The EU described its migration policy as human rights-based, seeking to balance strong and well-managed borders with the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. According to the representative, measures taken in response to difficult border situations, including the instrumentalisation of migration and hybrid threats, had to remain necessary and proportionate. The EU further maintained that effective and sustainable returns, both voluntary and non-voluntary, were an essential component of a comprehensive and balanced migration policy. In this regard, it promoted reintegration and voluntary returns through cooperation with African partners, the IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The representative concluded by reaffirming the EU's commitment to ensuring that migration governance fully upholds the human rights of all migrants without discrimination.

The Republic of Kenya on behalf of the African Group



The representative of the Republic of Kenya, speaking on behalf of the African Group, thanked the Working Group for its report. The African Group took note with concern of the conclusion that violent and discriminatory border regimes, precarious migration pathways and systemic gaps reproduced global inequalities and denied migrants their fundamental human rights in many states. It condemned the surge of violent manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, fuelled by ideologies it described as scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous.

To reverse this trend, the representative called on states to recognise the dignity and equality of all people on the move, including Africans and people of African descent, and to address

the racialised narratives, policies and practices that devalue their experience and suffering. The African Group further urged states to ensure the inclusive, meaningful and effective participation of people of African descent in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of migration policies. Finally, it supported the call to acknowledge the contribution of African and Afro-descendant migrants to the social and economic development of receiving countries.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation



The representative of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) observed that, 25 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, commitments to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance had yet to translate into action. Referring to the findings of the Working Group, the representative stressed that people of African descent continued to face systemic exclusion, violence and racism at every stage of migration. According to the OIC, this was no accident but the result of the legacies of slavery and colonialism, reinforced by policy choices that demanded accountability. Migrants, the representative insisted, had to be recognised as rights holders rather than as threats to be managed.

The OIC expressed concern about rollbacks in some countries, including the dismantling of institutions dedicated to combating racism, which threatened decades of progress. It was equally alarmed by rising hate speech online and offline, including on religious grounds, targeting people of African descent. Amplified by the media, such narratives had turned the word “migrant” into a racialised label. The representative therefore called on the media to

promote inclusion, dignity and social cohesion rather than fear. The OIC welcomed the call of the Working Group for migration partnerships based on equality rather than surveillance and control, for safe and regular pathways including family reunification, and for safeguards against racial bias in border technologies. Finally, it supported the elaboration of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, and called on states to engage constructively in this process.

5. Relevant Oral Statements by Other Delegations

Jamaica



The representative of Jamaica thanked the Working Group for the thematic focus of its work on global migration. As a country of origin, transit and destination, Jamaica had long recognised the importance of ensuring that migration was governed in a manner that protected the rights and dignity of migrants. The representative noted that the Jamaican diaspora, which was approximately the same size as the population of Jamaica itself, played a significant role both for the country and for the countries Jamaicans now call home. In this regard, the delegation welcomed the recommendation of the Working Group that member states acknowledge the contribution of African and Afro-descendant migrants to the social and economic development of receiving countries.

Jamaica also took note of the observation that temporary labour migration programmes often perpetuated exploitation and racial discrimination. For this reason, the representative explained, Jamaica routinely reviewed and strengthened its labour mobility agreements to improve working conditions, ensure fair wages and secure access to social benefits, notably

through the Overseas Employment Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The Government had also enhanced its pre-departure training programmes to ensure that workers were well informed of their rights and responsibilities, and continued to engage with host governments to monitor conditions and address concerns affecting Jamaican workers abroad. In closing, the representative reaffirmed Jamaica's commitment to the mandate of the Working Group as the Second International Decade for People of African Descent advanced.

The Republic of South Africa



The representative of the Republic of South Africa aligned the delegation with the statement of the African Group and thanked the Working Group for its report. South Africa noted the conclusion that violent and discriminatory border regimes, precarious migration pathways and systemic gaps reproduced global inequalities and denied migrants their fundamental human rights. It shared the view of the Working Group that humanising migration required recognising the dignity and equality of all people on the move, and addressing the racialised narratives, policies and practices that devalued their experience and suffering.

The representative then turned to the question of historical responsibility, maintaining that enslavement, the trade in enslaved persons, including the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, colonialism and the serious human rights violations inflicted on Africans and people of African descent called for reparatory justice. Since these injustices had been inflicted on Africans and people of African descent as a group, the representative of South Africa argued that reparatory justice had to accrue to the collective and be comprehensive. The legacies of

enslavement and colonialism, the representative concluded, continued to affect all aspects of the lives of people of African descent.

The Republic of The Gambia



The representative of the Republic of The Gambia thanked the Working Group for its report and for its continued leadership in confronting the human rights challenges faced by Africans and people of African descent. The delegation deplored that Africans and people of African descent continued to face disproportionate profiling and discriminatory border enforcement, a reality that reflected systemic racism in mobility. Citing data from the International IOM, the representative noted that, although Africans represented only one fifth of the world's migrant population, they remained disproportionately exposed to profiling, detention and discrimination along migration routes.

The Gambia observed that migration among Africans and people of African descent was likely driven by the pervasive legacies of enslavement and colonialism in their countries of origin. Yet safe and legal migration pathways remained elusive for these migrants, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, racial profiling and violent treatment by border officials during transit and by security forces in destination countries. The Gambia therefore called on states to show greater respect for human dignity and their human rights obligations in migration governance. It also stressed the importance of continued international cooperation and technical support to strengthen national monitoring mechanisms and ensure the full protection of the rights of migrants.

The Republic of Ghana



The representative of the Republic of Ghana thanked the Working Group for its report and welcomed its recognition that the legacies of enslavement and colonialism continued to shape contemporary racial discrimination, inequality and exclusion. Ghana particularly noted the analysis of how these legacies remained embedded in migration governance, mobility regimes and border practices. The delegation expressed concern that restrictive visa regimes, racial profiling, detention, deportation and inadequately regulated digital technologies could reproduce racialised inequalities and heighten the vulnerability of Africans and people of African descent to trafficking, exploitation and abuse. It was equally alarmed by the persistence of historical injustices through contemporary structures affecting land rights, natural resources, displacement, economic opportunity and access to justice.

Ghana therefore supported the call of the Working Group for rights-based migration governance, safe and regular migration pathways and effective oversight. Stressing that the importance of addressing both historical wrongs and their continuing consequences could not be overstated, the representative emphasised that reparations, decolonisation, self-determination and international cooperation were essential to tackle structural racial inequality and ensure the meaningful participation of people of African descent. The delegation concluded by asking the Working Group how states could move from recognising historical racial injustice to adopting concrete measures against its contemporary manifestations, including racialised migration, economic exclusion and land dispossession.

The Kingdom of Spain



The representative of the Kingdom of Spain aligned the delegation with the statement of the European Union and welcomed the recommendations of the Working Group. Spain shared the concern about racial discrimination and about discourse linking migration to crime. It was particularly concerned by the rise of hostile narratives fuelled by misinformation and stereotypes that portrayed migrants as a threat, as such discourse distorted reality and weakened democracy and social cohesion. The representative stressed that public policy and public debate had to be based on evidence, and highlighted the work of the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia in this regard.

Spain defended models of orderly migration and mobility that responded to labour market needs and were based on cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination. It agreed on the need to expand safe and regular pathways, to strengthen protection against trafficking and exploitation, and to pay special attention to the intersectional forms of discrimination affecting women, girls and children of African descent. According to the representative, the protection of fundamental rights and the effective management of migration were not incompatible but mutually reinforcing. Spain concluded by asking the Working Group which good practices it would recommend to prevent racial profiling and to guarantee the effective participation of people of African descent in the design, implementation and evaluation of migration policies.

The People's Republic of China



The representative of the People's Republic of China welcomed the dialogue between the Human Rights Council and the Working Group and thanked the Working Group for its report. China observed that people of African descent continued to suffer from structural racism, economic exclusion, judicial injustice and the stigmatisation of their identity in many countries. The delegation noted with concern that some Western countries are seriously violating the rights of people of African descent on the move. Describing AI as a double-edged sword, the representative stated that it offered development opportunities for people of African descent, but also exposed them to digital bias.

China therefore called on the countries concerned to face up to and genuinely shoulder their historical responsibilities, to cease infringing upon the human rights of people of African descent and to take proactive measures to eliminate systemic racial injustice. It further stressed the importance of using digital technology to empower people of African descent, bridge the digital divide and achieve digital justice, so that they could enjoy the fruits of development on an equal footing. The representative concluded by affirming China's readiness to work with the international community to advance the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

6. Civil Societies and Non-Governmental Organisations

Civil society organisations largely welcomed the findings of the Working Group and stressed that racial discrimination against people of African descent was structural and rooted in enslavement, the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism. Several speakers supported the conclusion that temporary labour migration programmes perpetuated exploitation, and called for migration governance to shift from punitive removal to regularisation and community-based pathways. Others regretted that violations at borders, including racial profiling, prolonged detention and discriminatory digital technologies, continued without accountability. They urged states to engage in good faith in the drafting of the United Nations declaration on the human rights of people of African descent, and to ensure that it applied existing obligations such as non-refoulement to migration, recognised reparatory justice and provided for independent monitoring.

Speakers also drew attention to specific regional situations. Some recalled the discrimination, land dispossession and enforced disappearances faced by Tamils in north-east Sri Lanka, and questioned the responsibility of former colonial powers. Others described the discrimination faced by minorities and sub-Saharan migrants in North Africa, while acknowledging positive steps such as Tunisia's 2018 law against racial discrimination. Particular concern was raised about the arbitrary detention, sexual violence and collective expulsions of Black African migrants in Tunisia, the targeting of associations supporting them, and the torture, enslavement and forced returns of migrants in Libya. Recalling that the International Criminal Court had found that Black migrants were specifically targeted for enslavement and persecution in a Libyan prison, civil society urged European states to stop outsourcing migration control to authorities committing abuses.

7. Concluding Remarks by the Chair of the Working Group

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Mamadou welcomed the contributions made during the dialogue, particularly the readiness of Suriname and Mexico to implement the recommendations in cooperation with the Working Group.

Responding to questions on how states could strengthen safeguards against the abusive use of AIe in migration control, she stressed that technology was not neutral. Facial recognition and profiling tools could amplify existing racial biases, and she therefore insisted that migrants had to be treated as rights holders and not as data. Technology, she argued, should reduce rather than reinforce inequalities. To this end, states had to assess the human rights impact of such tools, ensure transparency and independent supervision, and provide reparations to those affected by discrimination.

On the participation of people of African descent in migration policies, Ms. Mamadou explained that policies grounded in human rights, dignity and racial justice, rather than in criminalisation and exclusion, would allow migrants to participate meaningfully without fear of detention or deportation. Answering the question raised by Spain on racial profiling, she called on states to adopt laws and policies prohibiting the use of race and ethnic origin as a basis for suspicion and decision-making in law enforcement. She also recommended training police officers to recognise their own prejudices and to base their action on international human rights standards.

Recalling that the mandate of the Working Group was due for renewal during the 63rd session, Ms. Mamadou reflected on its 24 years of work, during which it had conducted numerous sessions and country visits, produced thematic studies and sent some 200 communications to states and other stakeholders. She encouraged states, civil society and United Nations mechanisms to strengthen their cooperation with the Working Group in order to amplify the impact of its work. She concluded by affirming that the determination of the Working Group remained unchanged, since equality had to be more than a promise and become a reality for all people of African descent.

V. Geneva International Centre for Justice Position

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) welcomes the report of the Working Group and the renewal of its mandate. GICJ stresses that structural racial discrimination, rooted in enslavement and colonialism, continues to shape border governance through racial profiling, prolonged detention, punitive deportations and discriminatory digital technologies, often without accountability. It urges States to engage constructively in the elaboration of the United Nations declaration on the human rights of people of African descent and to ensure that it is anchored in existing binding obligations and recognises reparatory justice.

GICJ further calls on the Republic of Suriname to fully implement the judgments of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, to adopt the Bill on the Collective Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, and to ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). It calls on the United Mexican States to harmonise its anti-discrimination legislation with article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to prohibit racial profiling through binding protocols, and to ensure a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Mr Sael Silva Cisneros.



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