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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixty-first session  
Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent  
Fourth session  
Geneva, 25 October- 05 November 2004  
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**THEMATIC ANALYSIS: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

**Health, employment and housing**

**Note by the Secretariat**

1. States participating in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001, adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action containing recommendations intended to strengthen the international human rights framework to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
  
2. Among the three United Nations mechanisms established to follow-up the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and serviced by the Anti-Discrimination Unit of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. The Commission on Human Rights, in resolution 2002/68, provided the Working Group with the mandate to, inter alia, study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the diaspora and propose measures and submit recommendations for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent ( paras. 8(a)-(d) ).
  
3. The Working Group decided at its first and second sessions, held from 25 to 29 November 2002 and from 3 to 7 February 2003 respectively, to recommend that specific themes relevant to the situation of people of African descent be addressed at forthcoming sessions. The Working Group considers that this approach would allow for specific invited experts on the selected themes to inform the discussions and enrich the debates at the sessions, and lead to the formulation by the Working Group of measures and recommendations addressed to the Commission.
  
4. At its third session, held from 29 September to 10 October 2003, the Working Group drew from the measures proposed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action three themes for examination: the administration of justice, the media, and access to education and information technology. Under these themes, the Working Group proposed to the Commission steps that could be taken to protect and promote the human rights of people of African descent.

5. Consistently relying on the provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Chairperson of the Working Group decided at the third session that the themes to be examined at the fourth session would be employment, health and housing. In this respect, the Durban Programme of Action “urges financial and development institutions and the operational programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations, in accordance with their regular budgets and the procedures of their governing bodies (...) to develop programmes intended for people of African descent allocating additional investments to health systems, education, housing, electricity, drinking water and environmental control measures and promoting equal opportunities in employment, as well as other affirmative or positive action initiatives”(para. 8( c) ).

6. As regards **health**, four sub-themes will be examined: (i) statistical data and socio-economic indicators in the field of health; (ii) access to health care for people of African descent; (iii) the disparities that have emerged in infant and maternal mortality rates, childhood immunization, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, cancer and communicable diseases; (iv) the investment programmes undertaken in the medical/sanitary and public health sectors. These will be discussed on 28 and 29 October 2004.

7. As regards **employment**, four sub-themes above will be examined : (i) statistical data and socio-economic indicators in the field of employment; (ii) equal opportunities in employment; (iii) equal access to employment in the public sector, including the public service; (iv) equal access to the equitable presence of people of African descent at all levels within organizations. They will be discussed on 26 and 27 October 2004. The same arrangements will prevail as for the previous item (see para. 6).

8. As regards **housing**, the following three sub-themes will be examined: (i) statistical data and socio-economic indicators in the field of housing; (ii) equitable access to housing; (iii) the investment programmes undertaken in the housing sector. They will be discussed on 1 and 2 November 2004.

9. Arrangements for discussion include an introduction of the theme by the Chairperson and 15 minute presentation by each of the four panellists, followed by a discussion including a question – and – answer session among the members of the Working Group, other participants and the panellists. At the end of each day, the Working Group will hold a closed meeting to discuss its conclusions and recommendations. It will be essential for all panellists to be present until the end of debate.

10. Panelists are requested to prepare and submit to OHCHR a paper, single spaced and no more than five pages, either in English or French only, owing to insufficient time for translation. It is important that the paper include specific recommendations. It is equally important that the paper be received by the Secretariat no later than 11 October 2004, in order to have sufficient time for circulation among participants.

11. The papers and the panellist's curriculum vitae should be addressed to Ms. Marie-Dominique Mornet (tel +41 22 9179221, fax +41 22 9179050, [mmornet@ohchr.org](mailto:mmornet@ohchr.org)), who can also provide practical assistance concerning the participation of panelists.

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