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and Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-seventh session
Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda

**PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION:
PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES**

**Written statement* submitted by All For Reparations and Emancipation (AFRE),
a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 July 2005]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

We, the Afrodescendant minorities throughout the Americas Region and Slavery Diaspora, have been attending and intervening at the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights for eight years. We have been praying for our most basic human rights: our language, culture, and religion; and, we have been repeatedly asking for the recognition of our self-chosen identity, Afrodescendants.

The Working Group on Minorities has recognized us, the Afrodescendant minorities, suffering the lingering effects of slavery. We seek the recognition of the Sub-Commission and the entire United Nations.

The United Nations is perceived to be the zenith body of law and order of the world. What other body of law can we call upon? We call upon you, the Sub-Commission. The Sub-Commission has a more respected voice than do we, the minority. As ex-slaves, up from civil death and given birth, we ask the Sub-Commission to refer to us collectively, by our self-chosen name. We have pledged this name - Afrodescendants. In doing this we invite the hopes of the protection of the UN.

We are unlike other people of African descent who live today in different parts of the world. They still have their identity; their mother tongue, culture and religion, and their tribal kinships. They can enjoy the protection and assistance of their national authorities, if they so choose. But we, who were rendered a stateless people by slavery, were deprived of all of these most precious rights, and are dead, (denied) by the deprivation of the right, the enjoyment of our mother tongues, cultures and religions. Unlike other people of African descent we have been identified by the majority population as sambo, colored, negro, African American, among other names.

Due in part to the efforts of the Working Group on Minorities, for the first time in the history of our sojourn, we who are descendants of enslaved Africans collectively took on the identity of Afrodescendants at La Ceiba, Honduras in March 2002. Thus, the Working Group on Minorities not only brought us together, they helped us to arrive at this identity.

For us, the Working Group on Minorities is the soul, if we could use that word, of the UN. When we reported that our mother tongues, cultures and religions were forcibly taken and we questioned whether or not we had human rights, the Working Group on Minorities responded. They were instrumental in igniting the torch of a definitive identity.

The Working Group on Minorities answered our prayers and placed Afrodescendants in their reports and on their agenda. Then, in April of 2005, we watched as the Working Group on Minorities came under assault. Because the Working Group on Minorities has us and assisted us in choosing an identity for ourselves, an assault on this Working Group on Minorities is an assault on us, the Afrodescendants. We ask that the Sub-Commission strongly defend and support the Working Group on Minorities and increase the mandate of this vital Working Group.

Afrodescendants appeared before the UN as a newly born baby and the Working Group on Minorities caused us to breathe. Now, if we do not thrive, both we and the UN will fall short. We ask the Sub-Commission to protect our life: we are the Afrodescendants.

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