

Statement
by the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

as delivered by Mr. Seymur Mardaliyev,
Counselor of the
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UNOG in Geneva

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Agenda item 9
Interactive dialogue with Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

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Mr. Vice-President,

We welcome the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent to the Council and thank them for the report presented.

We echo the view expressed in the report that people of African descent are particularly vulnerable to structural discrimination and various forms of inequality with respect to enjoyment of human rights. Unfortunately, violent manifestations of xenophobia, Afrophobia and hate speech that we continue witnessing in certain parts of the world contribute to the structural racism.

States in cooperation with civil society and local communities should develop proactive policies to strongly prevent and tackle any instances of racial violence, hate speech and incitement to hatred, including zero tolerance policies towards extremist nationalist and populist ideologies. At the same time, collection of disaggregated data is essential factor to accurately reflect and address the human rights situation of people of African descent. We underline the importance of eradicating all forms of discrimination faced by people of African descent including through the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Azerbaijan is proud of its deep-rooted policy based on principles of tolerance, equality and non-discrimination towards people of African descent. Historically, my country provided every opportunity for these people to study in Azerbaijan with the financial assistance from both Government and charity organizations like Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Today, two government-funded programs continue to offer similar scholarships for people of African descent. We are also currently actively cooperating with UNITAR to even broaden the educational opportunities in Azerbaijan for people belonging to this community. Human capacity development, *inter alia* through education will remain at the heart of our international development assistance policy in years to come. It is not accidentally human capacity development has been also chosen as main topic of Baku's bid to host World Expo 2025. As a whole, this is a part of Azerbaijan's modest global contribution to realization of SDG 4 which envisages inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Azerbaijan strongly supports the need for adopting the UN declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, considering that it could bring added value towards the elimination of racism and all forms of racial discrimination. Many positive developments have taken place following the launch of International Decade for People of African Descent both on global and regional levels, which in our opinion, opens favorable opportunities for further evolution of this important exercise.

In conclusion, we reiterate that Azerbaijan will remain actively engaged in and continue contributing to the promotion and protection of the rights of people of African descent in the months and years to come.

I thank you.