

Thank you very much Madam Chairperson. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I wish to congratulate Dr. Gaye McDougall for the excellent work she has done now as independent rapporteur. I also congratulate the UN working group on minorities for having made the third forum possible.

I wish to remind you that the UN General Assembly, in its 64th session, adopted resolution 64/69 which stated that 2011 was the international year of people of African descent. The expression people of African descent was adopted for the first time at the regional conference of Santiago in 2000 and was ratified in the world conference against racism, held in Durban South Africa in 2001. The first seminar on people of African descent that was held after Durban was organised by the working group on minorities and the office of the high commissioner for human rights in cooperation with the organisation for community ethnic groups, ODECO, which I had the honour of presiding in Tegucigalpa, Honduras from the 21-24th March 2002 with the participation from 19 countries. The Commission for Human Rights, the subcommission on the promotion and protection of human rights at its 54th session also highlighted this event. Persons, populations and communities of African descent are also considered as being minorities in many countries. Generally speaking they are victims of exclusion and racial discrimination, violation of human rights and kept in a state of poverty and a lack of opportunities.

We have had to carry out a number of combats and to mobilise our people in order to impact on decision making in the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental frameworks. As a background to the strategies we have applied we have what we call a campaign commitment in 2001, 2005 and 2009 we ensured that candidates of all political parties entered into this commitment with people of African descent in Honduras, this is a valuable tool in politics, and increases the ability of communities to participate. The most recent commitment to the campaign was in March last year, that is 2009, it made it possible to give us the following results. In complying with the 213 years of the presence of the Garifuna community we had a declaration by the ministry for the furtherance and interests of people of African descent in Honduras and indigenous people. We now have a declaration in office of the secretariat for ethnic minorities, now this ministry, summarises the action that can be carried out by the state in order to deal with problems such as the invisibility of IP, and people of African descent in Honduras.

I now wish to make a recommendation, in connection with this opportunity, governments and in particular the UN amongst other international bodies should support our peoples for their interrelated empowerment and institutional strengthening so that they can enjoy their human rights. By way of conclusion we call upon everyone to celebrate the year 2011 as the year of people of African descent and to urge our governments and international bodies as also the UN and specialised agencies to adopt additional economic, social and cultural policies so that together we can reduce hunger, disease and environmental deterioration and also illiteracy and the lack of overall development, we call upon them to develop the economy and within this to respect the identity of people of African descent. To help us and coordinate with us in order to hold the first summit of people of African descent in the year 2011 in Honduras. We also call upon the UN to state that the decade of people of African descent will begin in 2012 as also to set up an international fund for the sustainable development of people of African descent.