

IV FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES
"Guaranteeing the Rights of Minority Women"
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"Guaranteeing the Rights of Young Women of African Descent in the XXI Century"

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Mrs. President, Comrades,

I have the honor to address you for several roles, as women, young, African descent, a lawyer by training, activist by conviction; as director of the Caribbean Project Association of Costa Rica and coordinator of World Youth Summit 2011 African descent.

The Caribbean Project Association, as well as a large number of networks and women's organizations, and mixed, have been fighting steadily for the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of women of African descent in the Americas.

In the XXI century, women of African descent, particularly young women, continue to face significant problems in critical areas for full development. According to their practical needs, it has been identified the need to increase their income is identified, improve their access to jobs in the formal sector, and increase their ability to generate income in the informal sector; improve their overall health, and the full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights, and prevent HIV / AIDS.

At the level of long-term strategic interests, the need to overcome their invisibility in poverty statistics, improve their level of formal education, vocational, technical and technological; overcome discrimination in access to education. And to have an inclusive education that reflects the culture, history and contributions of people of African descent to the development of States; create new opportunities for access to the labor market and decent employment; as well as recreational spaces that promote healthy lifestyles; improve their political participation at all levels; overcome sexual, physical, psychological violence, and prevent that in women and girls become victims of trafficking.

Similarly, it is highlighted the lack of real opportunities for the establishment of economic enterprises, manifested among other things by poor access to credit resources, coupled with the problems facing many African Descent communities in the Americas on tenure and titling of ancestral territories.

In particular I refer to the situation faced by women and Afro-descendant families of Costa Rican South Caribbean, which today are fighting against the demolition of their homes and commercial establishments located in ancestral territories. In disregard of the right they have under instruments such as the Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities whose art. 5 in accordance with art. 1 states that

national policies and programs are planned and implemented with due regard to the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities, so that such States protect the existence and identity of such minorities within their territories.

We must insist on the need for disaggregated statistical and systematic quality as a fundamental technical tool for decision making and to construct informed policies.

We must continue to promote the real political participation of minority women in their level of political parties, government institutions and even inclusion in international organizations, making a crossing of multiculturalism in all affirmative action for women.

Similarly, it is necessary the mainstreaming of the generational component in the development and implementation of public policies and cooperation. This is necessary to ensure the vision and active participation of young women in their economic and political empowerment. We must not perpetuate the old unequal structures even at the level of social organizations, largely grounded in a patriarchal and sexist adult-centric vision; a major weakness of these social movements that undermine the necessary processes of intergenerational dialogue promoted by the youth.

It is important to note the efforts taken by new partners and strategic partners for empowerment and inclusive development of the young people of African descent; partners such as:

1. The National Institute of Women of Costa Rica, currently led by a woman of African descent, who after consultations with the various groups and women's organizations in the country, has been given the task of exerting a role as trainer, facilitator and articulator to open autonomous spaces for their empowerment.
2. Population Fund, United Nations, particularly the Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, who is especially committed with the processes of strengthening of African Descent Youths. They strongly support the process of the first World Summit of African descent Youth and studies such as the recent "Youth African descent in Latin America: Different Realities and Unredeemed Rights " report.
3. The Inter-American Development Bank, which has produced a very interesting and useful tool at the institutional level, the Guide About Good Practices for Political and Social Inclusion of Women of African Descent in Central America.

We are at a crucial time, characterized by the resurgence of vital importance for the progress of people, the YOUTH. We have witnessed how the strength and passion for the pursuit of freedom and equality, coupled with the power that entails the use of new information technologies and communication, have been the driving forces for the various groups led by young people, who are the architects of structural changes in countries around the world.

The African descent youth has always been part of this revolutionary breakthrough scenario; however, within the framework of the International Year of African descent, we have taken a major step towards a more visible and strong role, bringing together representatives of 44 countries to promote a plural gathering space, generated by and for young people to exchange experiences, analysis and discussion on the current situation of youths of African descent worldwide.

In that sense, the youth participants of World Youth Summit of African descent have reaffirmed in the Declaration of San Jose various aspirations and demands that I will share in this Forum:

1. Develop national strategic plans to combat structural and selective violence against youths of African descent, particularly against girls, adolescents and young women of African descent;
2. To promote equal opportunities for decent work and increase strategic and continuous investment in development programs and projects for young people of African descent;
3. Guarantee sexual and reproductive rights as fundamental human rights, particularly recognizing the autonomy and freedom of women and girls of African descent over their bodies and their sexuality; as well as facilitating access to comprehensive friendly health services without discrimination and with confidentiality;
4. Generate guidelines on agro, ecological and domestic; and national and foreign investment in rural areas and in productive lands that do not harm the nature and permanence of black communities, allowing the conservation of natural farming principles of these peoples and communities that they have maintained for decades allowing their food security;
5. Promote participation at all levels and the strengthening political articulation platform of the African Descent youth. In this regard, we recommend to the various treaty bodies and special procedures of the United Nations and its agencies, the incorporation of the study of the situation of the Afro-descendant youth in their work, as part of its commitment to improve coexistence among all peoples of the world.

Thank you very much!

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