

## **Ninth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues on “Minorities in Situations of Humanitarian Crises”**

### **Statement by the 2016 Fellows of People of African Descent, OHCHR**

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**Geneva, 24 – 25 November 2016**

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Good afternoon, President and esteemed participants of the Forum on Minority Issues,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this privileged Forum. I am Khitanya Petgrave from Jamaica, representing the 2016 Fellows of People of African Descent, a programme for human rights advocates by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We would like to address the following issues concerning People of African Descent regarding humanitarian crises in migration.

The current global migration is overshadowed by a humanitarian and human rights crisis. As , the numbers of the migrants who have died crossing the Mediterranean Sea are astronomical. A 2016 IOM report states that **2,901 people died en route while crossing from Africa to Europe during the period January to June 2016. In six months only!** Other charities such as the Spanish NGO “Movimiento Por La Paz” and “Doctors without Borders” have recorded similar figures. We will never know the real numbers because these are estimates based primarily on survivors’ testimonies.

**Dear President,**

The vast majority of the people **are of African descent, fleeing because of war, political instability, and persecution** from countries including those from Northeastern and Northwestern Africa. Many are preyed upon by smugglers and violated by national authorities according to the above mentioned IOM report.

If they are fortunate enough to arrive to countries in Europe including Germany and France **through other countries including Spain and Italy, they face systematic racism, racial discrimination and Afrophobia.**

Their basic access to human rights are limited, they lack access to basic health services, accommodation needs, and work permits. **We would also like to highlight**

**the humanitarian needs of women and children of African descent who suffer from the intersectionalities of race, gender and other forms of discrimination and, as such, are vulnerable to harassment, violence, human trafficking and prostitution.**

We remind the United Nations and Member States that the problem of Afrophobia, systematic racism racial discrimination still exist and has to be urgently dealt with in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the Sustainable Development Goals. **Without the promotion of migrant and minorities' rights, including those of People of African Descent, we will not achieve the desired goals.**

**Hence, we recommend to the forum the following:**

1. To prioritise the humanitarian and human rights needs of migrants of African descent, especially women and children, respecting their rights and dignity.
2. In compliance and in the spirit of conventions like the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICMW) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), we encourage global communities to support the institution of measures to address those in-transit as they attempt to cross their borders.

**Finally,**

**We remind our international organisations of our shared responsibility of  
“Transforming our world and leaving no one behind.”**