REGIONAL MEETING OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ON THE DECADE OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Representatives of Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela met in Brasilia, Brazil, on 20 and 21 March 2014, to discuss proposals for the Decade of People of African Descent established by the United Nations (UN), from 2015 onward, as well as by the Community of Latin American and the Caribbean States (CELAC), from 2014 onward.

Invited by the Secretariat on Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, the participants of this Regional Meeting had the following objectives: to work to agree upon a common position of the Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) in negotiations to be held in the United Nations with a view to preparing a program of action for the International Decade of People of African Descent; to develop proposals for the Decade of Latin American People of African Descent established by CELAC; and to recommend international, regional and national strategies in order to promote the inclusion of people of African descent and overcome racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The representatives of the abovementioned countries:

1. Bearing in mind the principles of the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings enshrined in international instruments on the promotion and protection of human rights, they recalled the commitments made in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the III World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, which is a milestone in the fight against discrimination, prejudice and intolerance.

2. They stressed the importance of the contributions made by people of African descent to the social, cultural, religious, political and economic heritage of the region as well as the need to preserve and disseminate the rich legacy of people of African descent to the development of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. They reaffirmed the right of people of African descent to their own culture and identity, to equal participation in economic and social life, to the use and conservation of natural resources within their ancestral lands and the free practice of traditional African religions.

4. They committed to fight against social exclusion and marginalization of people of African descent, which are the root causes and aggravating factors of discrimination.

5. They supported the initiative of CARICOM on reparations.

6. They recalled that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (September, 2001) and the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Regional Conference of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile (December, 2000) contained a commitment to implement public policies of non-discrimination and social, cultural, economic and political inclusion of people of African descent, including through affirmative action.

7. Taking into account the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, they reaffirmed their commitment to develop national strategies and to enhance coordination of regional
and international policies aimed at the full and unconditional elimination of racism and all forms of discrimination.

8. They emphasized that this Regional Meeting has special importance in face of the creation of the Decade entitled "People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development", given that Latin America and the Caribbean have the world's largest population of people of African descent, estimated at about 200 million people.

9. Taking also into account the upcoming negotiations at the United Nations to prepare a program of action for the International Decade of People of African Descent, they committed to coordinate strategies and proposals at GRULAC and other multilateral fora.

10. They committed to mobilize efforts through GRULAC for the approval of the Draft Programme of Action for the Decade for People of African Descent and to ensure that the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda incorporate goals and objectives aimed at the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

11. They committed also to support the Draft Programme of Action for the Decade for People of African Descent elaborated by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, referred to in the Report A/HRC/21/60/Add.2 of the Human Rights Council, including, among others, the proposal to create of a UN forum on the rights of people of African descent and to draft a Declaration on the Rights of People of African Descent.

12. They recalled that the main proposals of the Draft Programme of Action elaborated by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent of the United Nations include:

- The duty to gather information, including disaggregated data, in order to increase the visibility of people of African descent and identify social gaps;

- Adoption of special measures, including affirmative action to reduce and provide remedy to disparities and inequalities resulting from historical circumstances;

- The duty of States to adopt measures to implement the right to development of people of African descent, taking into account economic factors;

- The commitment of States to adopt and implement legislation, policies and programs to ensure effective protection of people of African descent subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination based on gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status.

13. They recalled the Iberoamerican High Level Meeting to Commemorate the International Year of People of African Descent - AFRO XXI, in 2011, in Salvador, Bahia, in which was proposed the creation of an Observatory of Statistical Data On People of African Descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, of a Center of Historical Memory in the region, as well as of the Latin American Fund for People of African Descent.

14. They recognized that despite the progress in several countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting racial equality and the rights of people of African descent, there still remain great challenges in the fight against exclusion and marginalization on ethnic and racial grounds.
15. They welcomed the opening for signature of the Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Intolerance to representatives of Member States to the Inter-American Convention, and encouraged countries to continue the process of signature and ratification.

16. Taking into account the adoption of the Decade of Latin American and Caribbean People of African Descent by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), they committed to expand and enhance regional coordination and cooperation in combating racism and promoting racial equality within the framework of the CELAC as well as in other regional fora such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR).

17. They committed to support the implementation of the Working Group established by the CELAC to develop the Plan of Action for the Decade of People of African Descent, and to present the results and proposals of this Regional Meeting to the Presidency, the Troika and the Meeting of Ministries of Foreign Affairs.