



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
23 November 2024

English only

---

## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-ninth session

10–21 March 2025

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### **Statement submitted by Geledés – Instituto da Mulher Negra, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

---

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

Geledés – Black Woman Institute acknowledges the progress made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, the intersection of race and gender continues to disproportionately affect women of African descent and other marginalized groups worldwide. Racism affects not only Afro-descendants but also non-Aryan immigrants, religious minorities, and other non-white populations. It is crucial to understand racism as a tool that not only devalues human beings but also determines the unequal distribution of resources and power globally. The exploitation and dehumanization that marked historical injustices continue to shape socio-economic and political conditions for women today, where the compounded effect of race and gender often relegates women of African descent to the lowest tiers of society.

## **Interseccionality of Race and Gender and Violence Against Marginalized Women**

The intersection of race and gender is a critical factor in understanding the unique challenges faced by women of African descent. These women experience compounded forms of discrimination, where their race and gender intersect to limit their access to their rights. They are disproportionately represented in low-paying, insecure jobs and often face greater barriers to upward mobility compared to both white women and men of African descent. Women of African descent are also often overburdened with unpaid care work, which limits their participation in the formal economy and perpetuates cycles of poverty. The intersection of racial and gender-based violence further marginalizes these women, as they are often viewed as less worthy of protection by legal and institutional frameworks. Addressing violence against women of African descent requires a targeted approach that recognizes the racialized and gendered nature of this violence and includes specific measures to protect these women and ensure they have access to justice. Governments must invest in prevention strategies, such as community-led interventions and educational campaigns that challenge both sexist and racist ideologies.

## **Economic Inequality and Vulnerability**

Women of African descent face significant economic disparities, being overrepresented in informal and precarious employment, which offers little security, few benefits, and limited legal protection. They are often employed in sectors such as domestic work, which is undervalued and underpaid. In many countries, these women are among the most economically vulnerable, with limited access to social safety nets, financial services, and economic opportunities. This economic marginalization is compounded by systemic racism and gender discrimination, which creates barriers to their advancement in the formal economy. Policies that aim to promote economic empowerment must specifically target women of African descent, providing them with access to formal employment, financial services, and training opportunities. Additionally, initiatives that support entrepreneurship and small business development among these women can play a crucial role in reducing their economic vulnerability and increasing their agency.

## **Access to Education and Skills Development**

Education is a key factor in breaking cycles of poverty and marginalization, yet women and girls of African descent face significant barriers to accessing quality education. These barriers include racial discrimination in schools, lack of resources in marginalized communities, and systemic exclusion from higher education. Girls of African descent often drop out of school at higher rates than their white peers, limiting their future opportunities. Economic pressures, early pregnancies, and unsupportive school environments contribute to this. It is essential to implement affirmative action policies and targeted educational programs that ensure equal access to education and skills development for women of African descent. Programs must focus not only on basic education but also vocational training, digital literacy, and STEM fields, where women of African descent are underrepresented. Through targeted investment in education, future generations of Afro-descendant women can gain the skills to break cycles of poverty.

**Health and Reproductive Rights:** The health outcomes of women of African descent are often worse than those of their white counterparts, reflecting systemic racism in healthcare systems. These women face higher maternal mortality rates, limited access to reproductive health services, and inadequate mental health support. In some countries, women of African descent are more likely to suffer from preventable diseases due to inadequate healthcare infrastructure and lack of access to affordable, quality care. Additionally, medical racism can mean that their pain is not taken seriously, or they receive inferior treatment based on racial biases. Policies must address these disparities by ensuring that healthcare services are accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate for women of African descent, with a focus on improving maternal health and reproductive rights. Mental health services must also be prioritized, particularly for women who have experienced trauma due to violence or discrimination.

## **Political Participation and Representation**

Women of African descent are underrepresented in political institutions, limiting their ability to influence policy decisions that affect their lives and communities. Structural barriers such as discrimination, lack of resources, and exclusion from political processes prevent these women from participating fully in political life. The underrepresentation of women of African descent in decision-making roles not only affects their ability to advocate for policies that benefit their communities but also perpetuates their marginalization. Efforts to increase the political participation of women of African descent must include affirmative action policies, capacity-building programs, and measures to dismantle the systemic barriers preventing them from accessing leadership roles. Political parties and institutions must be held accountable for ensuring that their processes are inclusive and reflective of the diversity of their constituencies.

## **Recognition of Women's Leadership and Collective Rights**

Despite the challenges they face, women of African descent have historically played key leadership roles in their communities and movements for social justice. From grassroots organizing to international movements, these women have been at the forefront of advocating for their communities' rights, often without recognition or support. However, their contributions are often overlooked. Recognizing and supporting the leadership of these women is essential to advancing both gender and racial equality. Governments and international organizations must invest in the

leadership development of women of African descent by providing them with resources, platforms, and training to advocate for their rights and contribute to policy debates. Collective rights and community-led movements must be supported as critical vehicles for social change.

### **Addressing Poverty and Social Exclusion**

Women of African descent are disproportionately affected by poverty, particularly in rural areas where access to basic services is limited. Poverty reduction strategies must focus on the racial and gendered dimensions of poverty, ensuring these women have access to housing, clean water, education, and social protection programs. These women often live in areas underserved by government programs and are more likely to be excluded from economic growth initiatives. Governments must prioritize the inclusion of these women in economic development plans, ensuring that they are not left behind in national and global progress. Social protection programs that provide income support, child care, and healthcare access are essential in helping these women lift themselves out of poverty and improve their overall well-being.

### **Reform of the International Financial Architecture**

The current international financial system, particularly multilateral development banks and national development banks, is not adequately addressing the needs of marginalized women. The UN Secretary-General's report to the CSW emphasized the need to reform the financial system to better serve women in poverty, including women of African descent. The international community must prioritize reforms that expand access to affordable financing, reduce the debt burden on developing countries, and ensure gender perspectives are integrated into financial decision-making. These reforms are critical to addressing the structural inequalities perpetuating the economic marginalization of these groups.

### **Implementation of International Recommendations**

Many countries, including Brazil, have yet to fully implement the international recommendations related to racial and gender equality, particularly those made by UN treaty bodies such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The lack of implementation of these recommendations perpetuates the structural inequalities faced by women of African descent. National governments must prioritize the integration of these recommendations into their policies and ensure that they are fully implemented at all levels of government.

In conclusion, we urge the Commission to ensure that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action fully incorporates both gender and race perspectives wherever necessary. Intersectional inequalities must be addressed through national policies and international commitments that reflect the diverse experiences of women, particularly those from marginalized racial, ethnic, and religious groups. By recognizing and addressing these intersecting layers of discrimination, we can create more just and equitable societies for all.