

Information Note for Civil Society on the official visit of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent to Spain (19-26 February 2018)

The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) is undertaking a fact-finding visit to Spain from 19-26 February 2018. The Working Group's visit to Spain is at the invitation of the Government. The visit includes meeting with Government officials, national institutions and civil society in Madrid, Barcelona, Almeria and Ceuta.

What is the WGEPAD?

The WGEPAD is a UN body of independent experts dedicated to improving the human rights situation of people of African descent. One of their mandates is to visit different countries to examine critically the situation of people of African descent in the country, identify problems, and make recommendations for resolution of the problems. To fulfil its mandate, the WGEPAD undertakes country visits; holds two annual sessions; responds to information and allegations received concerning its mandate under the Communications procedure; and reports to United Nations Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on activities relating to the mandate.

The purpose of country visits

These visits provide an opportunity to examine in detail the situation of people of African descent in the country, to identify any problems and to make recommendations for how these could be resolved. By the nature of the mandate, the Working Group is required to look critically at the situation in a country and also identify good practices that could be replicated in other countries. The visits are intended to provide an independent and impartial assessment, which will then be of use to all actors.

What happens during a country visit?

The Working Group meets with relevant Government ministers, representatives of independent human rights institutions, UN agencies, civil society, academia, the media, human rights defenders, and people of African descent, among others. The Working Group will usually begin a visit in the capital city and then continue with visits to other cities or towns of particular relevance to the role and situation of people of African descent.

What sort of information is gathered during a visit?

The Working Group will gather the following types of information: any forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent; measures taken to prevent racial discrimination and protect victims of racism and hate crimes; mechanisms for the protection, integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees; responses to multiple forms of discrimination that specific groups of African descent may face and the efforts undertaken by the authorities to protect people of African descent from violations.

What happens after the visit?

At the end of the visit, the Working Group holds a media conference and issues a press release with its preliminary findings and recommendations. The Working Group releases a mission report indicating, among other things, the main concerns and recommendations for action. The report on the visit to Spain will be presented by the Working Group to the United Nations Human Rights Council in September 2018.

Members of the Working Group:

There are five members of the Working Group. The following members of the Working Group will participate in the Spain visit: Mr. Sabelo Gumedze, Chairperson of the Working Group; Ms. Marie Evelyne Petrus-Barry, Member of the Working Group and Mr. Ricardo A. Sunga III, Member of the Working Group.

Civil Society Participation

Civil society organizations and individuals are invited to provide information on the human rights situation of people of African descent in Spain and to participate in meetings to be held in the cities to be visited by the Working Group. For more details on attending the meetings in the different cities, please contact Ms. Isabelle Mamadou Blanco at isabelle@africandescent.org. Written submissions can also be sent to the Working Group through the following email address: africandescent@ohchr.org. Submissions are welcome on the human rights situation of people of African descent; including key concerns and recommendations.

For more information on the WGEPAD and its activities, please visit:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/WGEPADIndex.aspx>