

Concept note

LAUNCH OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DECADE FOR PERSONS OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE AMERICAS (2016-2025)

Introduction

On December 23, 2013, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) proclaimed the decade 2015 to 2024 as the **International Decade of Persons of African Descent** under the slogan "People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development" via Resolution AG/RES/68/237. With this document, the need to strengthen national, regional and international cooperation with regard to the full enjoyment of social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights of Afro-descendants, and their full participation in all aspects of life in their societies was emphasized. For its part, on June 4, 2014, the General Assembly of the OAS, through Resolution AG/RES 2824 also recognized the International Decade of Persons of African Descent.

Within this context, the OAS held a Special Session of the Permanent Council on April 22, 2015, during which Member States discussed the importance of addressing the challenges of people of African descent in the region, recognized the importance of celebrating their contributions and expressed the importance of developing a Plan of Action for the Decade for the specific context of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Permanent Mission of Colombia to the OAS presented a proposal for the creation of a "Working Group for the Preparation of a Plan of Action for the Americas for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent." After discussions within the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) at its meeting on 19 November 2015, the establishment of a Working Group to elaborate a regional Plan of Action within the framework of the International Decade of persons of African Descent (2015-2024) was approved by acclamation.

PAHO, and specifically the Gender and Cultural Diversity Unit (GD), was actively involved in the elaboration of the regional Plan of Action, which includes a specific component of health and expressly refers to PAHO for its implementation. In the context of the Afro-Descendant Decade, GD will provide technical cooperation to the afro-descendant networks and Ministries of health for the development of Afro-descendant health plans during this biennium. This is also in line with the work that GD is conducting towards developing a Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health for the Region.

Justification

An advocacy activity to launch the Plan of Action, which was recently approved at the OAS General Assembly (during its Second Plenary Session, 14 June 2016), is being proposed to reiterate the commitment of the different agencies with the Afro-descendant population. The work being conducted by PAHO towards the final elaboration of a Strategy and Plan of Action and the development of afro-descendant plans of health shows a clear commitment by PAHO with the Afro Decade and the Plan of Action and the joint hosting of this event will reiterate this commitment, and PAHO's leadership role, within the organization, to partners and external actors.

Objectives of the meeting

- ✓ Launch the Plan of Action for the Decade for Persons of African Descent in the Americas;
- ✓ Reiterate the commitment of PAHO to closing disparities in health and wellbeing experienced by Afro-descendant populations living in the Americas;
- ✓ Commit to next steps towards the implementation of the Plan of Action;
- ✓ Facilitate and support dialogue with partners (as well as internally within PAHO) on future actions for the full implementation of the Plan of Action

Participants: Ambassadors to the OAS, representatives of UN entities and other international agencies, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the State Department, the Inter-American Development Bank, members of the academia; prominent members of Afro-descendent populations;

Organizers: GD/FGL in collaboration with OAS

Place: Room B, Headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization, Washington, DC

Date: 26 July 2016

Time: 10.00 – 11.00 am