PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

AFRODESCENDIENTES Y LA MATRIZ DE LA DESIGUALDAD SOCIAL EN AMÉRICA LATINA: RETOS PARA LA INCLUSIÓN
One in five people living in Latin America is of African descent, the vast majority of whom are descendants of people who arrived on our continent from Africa through the transatlantic slave trade during the colonial period. Afrodescendants are, undoubtedly, one of the population groups that has been left behind in terms of the benefits of development, owing to historical processes of exclusion that are expressed in profound inequalities. Likewise, the enormous economic, social and cultural contributions that Afrodescendent people and communities have made to the development of our countries have not been fully recognized.

The situation of the Afrodescendent population in Latin America has improved in recent decades, in line with the processes of restoring democracy in the 1980s and 1990s, the growing mobilization of Afrodescendent organizations that have managed to put their perspective and demands on the public agenda, the development of normative frameworks to combat racism and promote racial equality at the international, regional and national levels, and the actions of governments and international organizations, particularly the United Nations system, committed to this agenda.

However, wide gaps persist in guaranteeing the rights and levels of well-being of the Afrodescendent population. Ethno-racial inequalities are one of the axes that structure the social inequality matrix in Latin America, and racism is a central element of the culture of privilege that still prevails and is perpetuated in our countries. All this is exacerbated in the difficult and unprecedented context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

A deep understanding of the reality experienced by the Afrodescendent population in Latin America is fundamental to being able to address these inequalities decisively. Even though all the countries of the region are committed to target 17.18 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which establishes the commitment to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, among other variables, progress made in this regard in recent years has been quite heterogeneous and much remains to be done. It is only in this century that the statistical invisibility of the Afrodescendent population began to be reversed through the inclusion of self-identification in some data sources, although important challenges remain to making Afrodescendants more statistically visible.

In order to contribute to the knowledge of this reality and the development of policies and strategies capable of dismantling the complex web of deficiencies, rights violations and inequalities that affect the Afrodescendent population in Latin America, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), at the request of the Government of Costa Rica, have produced the document Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: Retos para la inclusión.

The objective of the document is to provide the most up-to-date picture possible of the inequalities experienced by the Afrodescendent population in Latin America in key areas of development, such as the incidence of poverty, access to basic infrastructure, education, health, decent work and social protection. In all these areas, the intersection of ethno-racial inequalities with socioeconomic, gender, territorial and age inequalities is analysed, paying particular attention to the situation of Afrodescendent women, children, adolescents and youth. Other issues are also analysed, such as the normative framework for combating racism and promoting racial equality; the limited participation of the Afrodescendent population in political leadership at different levels; the importance of the Afrodescendent movement and organizations; the demographic context and statistical visibility of the Afrodescendent population; the various forms of violence that affect Afrodescendants; the relationship between racism and migration; as well as the institutional framework in the region for guaranteeing rights and promoting racial equality and some policy areas that are being put into effect to that end.
The document also states that it will not be possible to overcome the great challenges facing the region, which have been severely exacerbated in the context of the pandemic, and move towards equality and a new model of sustainable development unless decisive action is taken to further recognize, protect and guarantee the rights of the Afrodescendent population. To this end, it is necessary to consider the multiple and simultaneous forms of inequality, discrimination and exclusion suffered by Afrodescendent women, children, adolescents and youth, older Afrodescendants, Afrodescendent migrants, Afrodescendants with disabilities, the LGBTI+ Afrodescendent population, and Afrodescendants living in rural areas, traditional communities, less advanced territories and on the outskirts of large urban centres. Without ethno-racial equality there can be no effective democracy or full citizenship, and therefore no sustainable development.

The document will be presented at an event at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC.

Preliminary programme

Wednesday, 28 October
11 a.m.–12 p.m. (Costa Rica time, GMT-6)

Moderator
- Adriana Murillo, Ambassador of the Republic of Costa Rica to Chile

Presentation of the study Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: retos para la inclusión
- Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Commentators
- Epsy Campbell, Vice-President of Costa Rica
- Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (pre-recorded message)
- Rocío Muñoz Flores, Member of Presencia y Palabra: Mujeres Afroperuanas
- Harold Robinson, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Close
- Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)