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RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND
ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Written statement* submitted by All For Reparations and Emancipation (AFRE),
a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 February 2003]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The 58th Session of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2002/68 decided to establish a Working Group on People of African Descent. This Working Group of five experts has conducted two sessions. In its 59th Session the Commission on Human Rights will hear and consider recommendations of this Working Group.

Since 1994 the leader of All For Reparations and Emancipation (AFRE), Mr. Silis Muhammad, has been intervening at the United Nations on behalf of the Afro Descendants in the Americas Region and the slavery Diaspora. Because of his continuing concern with the human rights of Afro Descendants, AFRE has taken a strong interest in the newly formed Working Group on People of African Descent.

In November of 2002 AFRE invited a group of Afro Descendant leaders to attend and participate in the first session of the Working Group on People of African Descent. Then, after much careful deliberation, we decided not to attend the second session. With the greatest respect and appreciation for the decisions of the Commission on Human Rights undertaken on behalf of Afro Descendants, we ask that the Commission consider our position, stated as follows:

AFRE is concerned with restoration of our human rights, their recognition and reparations for Afro Descendants. We Afro Descendants are a people who have our roots in Africa, who have been forcibly transported to the Americas for slavery and who have experienced total destruction of our essence: our original identity, language and religion, and as a result we suffer discrimination.

Although we appreciate the efforts of the Working Group on People of African Descent, we understand that this Working Group has received its mandate from the Commission on Human Rights. We refer in particular to CHR Resolution 2002/68 (d) which asks the Working Group to elaborate a proposal for a mechanism to monitor and promote all of the human rights of people of African descent. We Afro Descendants do not possess human rights, as articulated in Article 27 of the ICCPR, for the Working Group to monitor or promote. Other people of African descent living in the Diaspora whose ancestors were not subjected to slavery in the Americas Region still have their original identity and their bond with others of their family, tribe or nation. We do not. Thus our human rights cannot be monitored or promoted. They must first be restored.

Afro Descendants are, to this date, no longer bonded together by the mother tongue, culture and religion of our ancestors due to forced denial of our original identity and forced mixed breeding during slavery. Our collective human rights (original language, culture and religion), as articulated in Article 27 of the ICCPR, were utterly destroyed.

In the countries in which Afro Descendants reside, we are in the position of minorities: either minorities numerically or minorities with regard to possession of money and power. In 1997 the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights placed Afro Descendant issues before the Working Group on Minorities, and since 1998 the Working Group on Minorities has given great expertise, time and consideration to Afro Descendant issues. They have organized

three regional seminars and they have brought in a number of scholars on issues such as autonomous and semi-autonomous arrangements.

We believe that the lack of collective human rights, the lack of UN recognition, and reparations must be addressed in order for the very grave injuries suffered to date by Afro Descendants to be resolved at their root.

We do not intend to mortgage the future of the generations of Afro Descendants to come. The leader of AFRE and other Afro Descendant leaders from the U.S. who support our position, feel that reparations must begin with restoration and UN recognition of our collective human rights. We do not agree to reparations only in the form of development money, affirmative action, examination of the records of slavery history, setting up monuments to honor our experience and so on. While these things may be helpful in improving the condition of our people, we Afro Descendants will still be a people without human rights recognition under UN law.

We Afro Descendants seek to be recognized by the UN as one people, however diverse, under our self-chosen name, living as minorities (either numerical or economic/power minorities) throughout the Region of the Americas and the slavery Diaspora. Because our issue is restoration of collective human rights, we believe it is best placed in the hands of the experts of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the Working Group on Minorities.
