

Joint African action crucial to protect persons with albinism from violence, highlights UN expert

13 June 2017 – Highlighting the importance of cooperation among countries to overcome the violence and discrimination faced by persons with albinism, a United Nations rights expert has urged African nations to fully implement a regional action plan on ending attacks on persons with albinism.

The plan sets out clearly what States can do – for example educating the public, collecting data and researching the root causes of the violence, – said the UN Independent Expert on human rights of persons with albinism, Ikponwosa Ero, in her message for [International Albinism Awareness Day](#).

The regional action plan to end attacks on persons with albinism in Africa – the first-ever such joint initiative – was recently endorsed by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. It includes 15 practical steps which are expected to go a long way in addressing the persisting and deadly challenge.

International cooperation will be a turning point in the [long battle to end discrimination for people with albinism](#), some of whom continue to be murdered for their body parts, – added Ms. Ero.

According to a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the action plan focuses on ensuring accountability as well as support for victims and uses legal and policy frameworks to deter practices of witchcraft and trafficking in body parts.

Further, Ms. Ero underscored that persons with albinism also face significant barriers restricting their equal participation in society, impacting their rights to enjoy physical and mental health and their ability to access adequate health care, education, social services, legal protection, and redress for abuses.

In particular, women and children face violence, suffer from discrimination, stigma and social exclusion, forced into becoming marginalized within their communities and face social exclusion caused by misunderstanding, deeply entrenched prejudices and stereotyping.

‘We cannot underestimate the importance of joint action’ – UN Independent Expert

‘We cannot rest until we have seen change in people’s lives and tackled the root causes of the current situation,’ she said, calling everyone concerned to be bold and to persevere to ensure that all people with albinism enjoy their full human rights.

“We cannot underestimate the importance of joint action [...] we advance together, with renewed hope inspired by the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ which is at the core of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.”

Ms. Ero’s statement has been endorsed by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights; the UN Special Rapporteur on physical and mental health, Dainius Pûras; the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Mutuma Ruteere; the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar; and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN [Human Rights Council](#) to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

In December 2014, the UN General Assembly [designated](#) 13 June as the International Albinism Awareness Day to draw attention to the stigma and violence that persons with albinism everywhere in the world.