Beyond the Human Rights Rhetoric on "Leaving No One Behind:"
Integrating the Elimination of Systemic Racism, and Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, into the Implementation of the SDGs [1]

Statement in Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, UN Headquarters. New York

Offered by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) with endorsements[2]

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The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, launched five years ago by the General Assembly, promised that the agenda will fulfill human rights to equality and non-discrimination across the 17 goals, "leaving no one behind." This statement from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) and endorsers questions whether this laudatory objective will be achieved by 2030. We provide evidence from content analyses of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework (2015) that although the introduction to the SDGs is visionary in its stated commitment to protect and fulfill human rights for all and to end racial, gender and other forms of discrimination prohibited by international law, the goals, targets and global indicators developed to evaluate progress on the attainment of the SDGs fail to reflect an equally robust focus on this most important human rights commitment.

We are particularly disappointed that the SDGs, targets and global indicators are disturbingly silent about the eradication of systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination which constitute global barriers to human development and the fulfillment of human rights throughout the lifespan. Despite a call by several UN human rights experts for disaggregated data for groups protected by international law (e.g. the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent), and although a mandate for disaggregated data is included within the SDGs Framework, only limited attention has been focused on disaggregation in some of the most dehumanizing contexts of discrimination – namely discrimination affecting racial and ethnic populations.

Therefore, we offer this statement with concluding recommendations with the hope that, as we move forward during the Decade of Action launched by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (2019) to step up the delivery of the SDGs by 2030, Member States, UN organs and programmes, NGOs, CSOs, and the private sector will go beyond the rhetoric of "leaving no one behind" by taking concrete steps to address and evaluate progress in eradicating systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination across the 17 SDGs.

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[2] Refer to p. 5 for the list of endorsers.

Systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination are global phenomena

Despite some advances due to decades of anti-racism struggle, systemic racism, racial, ethnic and related forms of discrimination continue as sources of marginalization, exclusion, inequality, and oppression among people in all regions of the world. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all their insidious and intersecting forms are human rights violations transmitted across generations and structurally rooted in the values, beliefs, institutional and national norms and practices, and everyday behavior of individuals and groups in every society (Essed, 1991; Jones, 1997; Dovidio, Glick, & Rudman, 2005). These human rights violations serve simultaneously to rationalize the hierarchical domination by a racial or ethnic group over other groups and to maintain psychological, social, political and material advantages for the dominant group, while producing cumulative adverse outcomes for oppressed and excluded groups (Okorodudu et al, 2015). Groups most affected by historic and contemporary forms of systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination include: Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, Indigenous peoples, Latinx minorities, migrants, and refugees (United Nations, 2001).

Originating in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, colonialism, and segregation, the continuing police murders of unarmed African American men, women, and youth in the U.S. provides a powerful illustration of racial oppression that results from and strengthens the persistence of systemic racism across generations and centuries if it is not eradicated. The killing of George Floyd, an African American, on 25 May 2020 while he was in the custody of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, led to the largest, most ethnically diverse civil protest across the U.S. against systemic racism since the 1960s. Due to the instantaneous outreach of social media images, the U.S. protest featuring Black Lives Matter and other advocacy groups became a massive global protest movement. Ethnically diverse crowds in the thousands marched both in solidarity with the protest in the U.S. and against racism in their own countries.

Disparities in human development due to systemic racism

Racial inequalities are evident in many developmental areas including: access to quality education, employment with living wages, justice, physical and mental health, and social security; access to basic needs like food, safe drinking water, and housing; access to political participation, equal protection against the ravages of climate disasters, and political participation; and protection against racial profiling and police violence (Glaser, Spencer & Charbonneau, 2014). Our discussion below presents evidence on some of these racial disparities.

Physical health disparities. Racism influences health across the life span beginning in childhood. A large meta-analysis of people identifying as minoritized racial groups around the world demonstrated a negative relationship between racism and health, in countries such as the Netherlands, Finland, Israel, Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Spain, Portugal, New Zealand, and Barbados (Paradies et al., 2015). Racism erodes health through a myriad of pathways, including a heightened stress-response, with adverse consequences for the cardiovascular, inflammatory, and immune systems (Harrell et al., 2011).

In the United States and Latin America, minoritized racial groups (Black, Native American and Indigenous) are more likely to get ill earlier in life, have faster disease progression and lower survival rates (Williams et al., 2019). There are vast racial health disparities for illness and mortality for African Americans living in the United States, with African Americans experiencing a disproportionate disease burden compared to White Americans across the leading morbidity indicators (National Center for Health Statistics, 2016). These disparities are particularly evident for stress-related illnesses such as heart disease and stroke (American Psychological Association Working Group on Stress and Health Disparities, 2017). The COVID-19 Pandemic which reached the United States (U.S.) in February 2020 has shown that vulnerable racial and ethnic groups including African Americans, Latinx, and Indigenous people who suffer from intergenerational inequalities in access to healthcare and other social determinants of health, have higher infection, hospitalization, and death rates due to the Coronavirus Disease (Moore, Ricaldi, Rose, et al., 2020).

Psychological/mental health disparities. Research on the short and long-term psychological effects of experiencing racial discrimination in childhood in the United States and South Africa has found that children who experience racial discrimination develop perceptions of threat, fear, victimization, low self-efficacy and self-esteem, and hopelessness. Cumulative experiences such as these can result in symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger and trauma (Geller, Fagan, Tyler & Link, 2014). Racial disparities are prominent in mental health treatment, with many factors influencing these disparities which in turn affect access to and quality of treatment. A study conducted in New Zealand found that perceived stigma from health professionals is one of the driving forces of racial disparities in physical and mental healthcare settings (Harris, et al., 2012).

Racial disparities related to other SDGs. The challenge of achieving other sustainable development goals (SDGs) is greater for particular minoritized racial and ethnic groups, including those of African and Indigenous descent. Minoritized racial and ethnic groups are generally further behind advantaged racial and ethnic groups on poverty, economic growth, and access to clean water and food. For example, in Brazil and South Africa Indigenous people and Afro-descendants suffer disproportionately from higher rates of poverty (Kabeer, 2014). Those who live in poverty typically have less access to food, less access to clean water and sanitation, and more exposure to air pollution than those from a higher income (Blakely, et al., 2005). The physical and psychological health disparities presented above are further exacerbated by racial disparities related to environmental justice and climate change (Wilson, Hutson & Mujahid, 2008). A study conducted in the United States found that African Americans are 8.5 times more likely to reside in areas that are more vulnerable to climate change compared to their White counterparts (Sadd, et al., 2013). Although racial inequalities are prevalent both within and among nations, research in the United States shows that Americans vastly underestimate the racial wealth gap, overestimating the extent to which society has progressed toward racial economic equality (Kraus, Onyeador, Daumeyer, Rucker, & Richeson, 2019).

Human rights discrepancies within the SDGs framework

It is distressing to find that the focus on eliminating systemic racism, racial/ethnic discrimination and racial inequality in the SDGs Framework remains peripheral to other aspects of inequality based on sex, age, and less frequently on disability. To assess these discrepancies, we did a content analysis of *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* document (United Nations, 2015) by comparing the frequency of various human rights-related identity-based words and phrases. Our search terms were selected from paragraph 19 of the introduction, and target 10.2 of SDG10, "Reduce Inequalities." For each of these words or phrases, we counted the total number of times the word or phrase appears in the document, finding that sex-related terms (e.g., woman, girl) are the most frequent identity terms, appearing a total of 68 times, and age-related terms (e.g., child, youth) appear 42 times. In contrast, racial identity terms (e.g. race, indigenous), occur 14 times, 7 times in the goals and targets section. The scarcity of racial identity terms across the 17 goals and 169 targets ignores the real-life intersectional processes by which each of the goals and their targets may be influenced by racism, race, ethnicity and related factors.

Winkler and Satterthwaite (2017) also report that inequalities based on race, ethnicity and similar factors do not receive the same attention as gender equality in the SDGs, their targets, and the global indicators developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and approved by the UN General Assembly to monitor progress on implementing the SDGs. While we support the strength of the gender focus in the SDGs, the authors' analysis of the SDGs global indicators is deeply troubling with respect to the exclusion of many marginalized groups. Although the call for disaggregated data by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability etc., appears at the top of the initial list of 230 indicators, Winkler and Satterthwaite found that the list does not include a single indicator specifically requiring disaggregation by race or ethnicity even in SDG10 on "Reducing Inequalities." Our analysis of the most recent update of the Global Indicators Framework in 2020 (Inter-Agency and Expert Group, 2017) shows a slight increase in the inclusion of race and ethnicity from zero to five indicators. With only two of the 169 targets and a minimum of five out of the 231 current global indicators requiring disaggregated data on race and ethnicity, these factors are likely to continue to be sidelined in the monitoring of the SDGs, resulting in the absence of useful information that could be available to Member States and other stakeholders for reducing existing systemic racial and ethnic discrimination as well as intersecting inequalities. A recent assessment in Australia of progress on the SDGs using disaggregated data found that the indigenous population lags significantly behind the national average for 11 out of 12 indicators reviewed (Allen et al., 2019), clearly demonstrating the significance of disaggregated data on race and ethnicity.

Urgent Call from Words to Deeds

As we commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the UN in 2020, we are reminded (Faupin, 2020) that the work within the UN on eradicating racism began shortly after its founding and led to the General Assembly's adoption of the first convention in the human rights framework – the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,1965 (United Nations, 2020). In spite of 75 years of the UN's anti-racism engagement, racism and racial and ethnic discrimination persists today as pervasive and destructive national and global forces.

Following the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reminded us that the persistent plague of racism is a "scourge [that] violates the UN Charter and debases our core values" (Guterres, 4 June 2020). He called for dismantling racist structures and reforming racist

institutions as well as a one-year debate on racism within the United Nations Organization as interventions central to the 2030 Agenda. Subsequently, a group of more than 20 senior UN executives of African descent published a strongly worded editorial in which they expressed outrage at the pervasiveness of systemic racism and stressed the importance of going beyond "words to deeds": "*It is time for the UN to step up and act decisively to help end systemic racism against people of African descent and other minority groups 'in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion'*" (Ghebreyesus et al., 2020).

We strongly support this call which is consistent with the recent assertion of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD, 2017) that the eradication of structural racism is key to the attainment of the SDGs (2017) as well as the advice of Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner for Human Rights during the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs, that without the inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities in the [2030] Agenda, the goal of "leaving no one behind" would not succeed (Hussein, 2015).

The silence of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),Targets and Global Indicators about eradicating the sources and consequences of racism and racial and ethnic discrimination undercuts rather than supports the advance and effectiveness of the global anti-racism movement. Commitment to concrete deeds is urgently needed to rectify this significant gap. Therefore, the recommendations and endorsements which follow are offered with the hope that, as we move forward during the Decade of Action on the SDGs by 2030 (2019), Member States, UN organs, funds and programmes, NGOs and CSOs, and the private sector will commit to implement observable and measurable policies and programmatic strategies to intensify and evaluate progress in eradicating systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination across the 17 SDGs.

1. Make a genuine commitment to the "Leave no one behind" principle by assessing and developing laws, policies and programmes to mitigate systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination relevant to each SDG.
2. Monitor and evaluate progress on all SDGs by using indicators disaggregated by race, ethnicity, descent, national origin, indigenous identity, age, sex, income, language, religion, disability, migratory status, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
3. With the leadership of the UN Statistical Commission, invest urgently in increasing significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable SDGs data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, descent, national origin, indigenous identity, age, sex, income, language, religion, disability, migratory status, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
4. Develop partnerships for enhancing technical capacity-building support in developing countries for generating disaggregated data and statistics, consistent with SDG17, initial Target 17.18.
5. Include in Member States Voluntary National Reviews, developed to assess progress on the SDGs, indicators and data from the existing mechanisms for monitoring compliance with human rights standards, especially compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Eliminations of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) of the Human Rights Council.
6. Speed up urgent contributions to the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024, by Member States and all stakeholders in support of the theme "Recognition, Justice, and Development," through strong, concrete actions to fulfill the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of people of African Descent through the SDGs.
7. Enhance strength of national dedication to human rights for all by ratifying and beginning the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by 2022, by Member States who have not yet done so.
8. Member States should "make the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action a central pillar of human rights education and implementation…combating all forms of racism…," in their implementation of the SDGs, as strongly urged by the recent statement of Ms. Tendayi Achiume, UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (23 March 2020).
9. Given the multiple factors that interact to influence human development, use different categories of group disaggregated data to discover and address developmental risks associated with different intersecting forms of group identity or oppression; for example: race/ethnicity x sex/gender x income; race/ethnicity x sex/gender x age; race/ethnicity x age x migration status; and other combinations of social group identities or forms of oppression.
10. Support genuine and effective partnerships by Member States and UN organs, funds, and programmes with non-governmental and civil society organizations and the private sectors to create and maintain strong and meaningful

collaboration in addressing and evaluating systemic racism and racial and ethnic discrimination through the 17 SDGs, consistent with the theme of the 75th Anniversary of the UN.

List of Non-Governmental Organization/Civil Society Organization Endorsers

Adolescent Health and Information Projects (AHIP) Nigeria

Afghanistan women peace torch organization

Africa Climate and Health Alliance

Africa Earth Environment and Wildlife Defenders

Africa World Now Project

African Coalition on Green Growth

African Voices Forum, Bristol

Afrihealth Optonet Association [CSOs Network]

American Psychological Association

Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention/ Meaningful World

Aube Nouvelle pour la Femme et le Development (ANFD)

Black Lives Matter, Memphis

BLAM UK

Carbone Guinée

Center for Hunger-Free Communities, Drexel University

Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation (DUZAFOUND)

Dunkingire Isi Yacu

Effe Rivista Femminista

European Health Psychology Society

Emmaus International

European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD)

First Peoples Worldwide

FOREM

Fundacion Arcoiris por el respeto a la diversidad sexual.

Fundación Unidas: Mujeres construyendo tejido social

Gatef organization
Gente de I'itoi

Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition

Global Distribution Advocates, Inc.

Huldah Foundation

Human Rights Educators - USA

Implementation Team of the International Decade for People of African Descent - Spain

Institute for Multicultural Counseling and Education Services, Inc.

International Association of Applied Psychology

International Center for Peace and Reconciliation

International Council of Psychologists

International Federation of Business and Professional Women

International Federation on Ageing

International Union of Psychological Sciences

International Women's Anthropology Conference/IWAC

International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)

JAGO NARI, Bangladesh

Karpay "Comunidades de Poder "

Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network

Malcolm X Grassroots Organization

Manhattan Multicultural Counseling, Inc.

Murna Foundation

National Alliance of Women's Organisations UK

National Ethical Service National Lawyers Guild International Committee

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Neighbors to Save Rivington House and Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition

New Afrikan People's Organization

NGO Committee on Ageing/NY

NGO Committee on Children's Rights

NGO Committee on Financing for Development

NGO Committee on Migration

NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns - NY

OMEP Organization Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire

Pan-African Psychology Union

Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance

Promundo-US

Psychological Society of South Africa

Psychology Coalition of NGOs Accredited at the United Nations (PCUN)

Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary NGO

Sisters of Charity Federation

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Society for Conservation and Sustainability of Energy and Environment in Nigeria	The Black Sex Worker Collective	US Human Rights Cities Alliance
Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP)	The Guild of Service	Women First International Fund
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI)	Tripla Difesa Onlus	Winnemem Wintu Tribe
	U. S. Human Rights Network	World Against Racism Network (WARN)
Soroptimist International	Ubuntu Institute for Community Development	World Council of Psychotherapy
Southern Africa Climate Change Coalition	UN WOMEN UK	
Technologies for Economic Development - TED	United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society	World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)
	United Religions Initiative	Zimbabwe Climate Change Coalition

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