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NEWS RELEASE

Top UN Official on Persons with Albinism Calls for Pan-African Action Plan

Governments can no longer claim ignorance, must act now

8 November 2016 (Pretoria, South Africa)

An action plan to combat attacks and discrimination against people with albinism in Africa is a critical priority for governments and civil society on the continent, declared the United Nations Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, Ikponwosa Ero, following the High-Level Meeting on Persons with Albinism in Africa.

“There have been over 600 attacks against persons with albinism since 2007 across 26 countries in Africa—and these are only the cases we know about. Many cases go unreported,” said Ero. “Assaults continue across the continent due to ignorance about albinism, ‘witchcraft’ practices that fuel the use, trafficking, and sale of the body parts of persons with albinism, and insufficient and ineffective responses by governments.”

Today’s High-Level Meeting was hosted by the UN Independent Expert, the Open Society Foundations, and the University of Pretoria’s Centre for Human Rights. Participants from 15 countries in Africa included high-profile persons with albinism who shared their experiences fighting stigma, discrimination, and violence. The action plan discussed today should become a continental standard, they said, and hold all stakeholders, particularly governments, accountable.

“Providing iron bars and proper locks for persons with albinism to secure their homes, particularly in rural areas; quickly and safely reintegrating people with albinism displaced due to attacks; providing cement to cover the graves of deceased persons with albinism so that their remains are not stolen—all of these are simple, effective, and low-cost measures that can and should be implemented immediately by governments,” said Ero.

“Claiming ignorance on albinism is no longer an option,” concluded Ero. “Now is the time to act.”

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About the United Nations Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism

Ikponwosa Ero (Nigeria) was appointed in June 2015 by the UN Human Rights Council as the first UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism. Inspired by her experiences as a person with albinism, Ero spent the last seven years working on protecting the human rights by people with albinism. As an international advocacy and legal officer of Under The Same Sun, an

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NGO with a focus on albinism, she participated in multiple UN activities and panels in Geneva and New York. She has extensive experience in research, policy development, and advocacy and has published widely on the issue.

To learn more, visit the website of the Independent Expert at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Albinism/Pages/IEAlbinism.aspx>, as well as the special website, “People with albinism: not ghosts, but human beings,” at <http://albinism.ohchr.org>.

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