SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

**United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**

**Country Visit to Mexico: End-of-Mission Statement**

**(20 May 2026)**

## Background of the visit

The Working Group of experts on people of African descent thanks the Government of México for its invitation to visit the country, for its cooperation and coordination. The Working Group also thanks Afro-descendant communities, peoples and individuals who shared their experiences, engaged in dialogue, and submitted documents. The Working Group notes with commendation the extreme resilience, resistance, dedication, and commitment of Afro-Mexican peoples to their communities, as well as their relentless pursuit of equality and their pride in their identity and culture.

During its visit, from 11 to 20 March 2026, the Working Group travelled to Mexico City; Córdoba and Yanga (Veracruz); Acapulco and Cuajinicuilapa (Guerrero); and El Azufre (Oaxaca). It met with several ministerial departments, decentralized bodies and autonomous institutions. It also met with the Office of the General Prosecutor, both chambers of Congress of the Union, the Judicial Administration Body and the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation. The Working Group further met with Afro-descendant organisations and communities, with academics, human rights defenders and non-governmental organisations. It visited the Museo Regional de Palmillas (Yanga) and the Afromexican Museum (Huehuetan), as well as Las Agujas Immigration Station (Mexico City).

The findings in this statement are of a preliminary nature. The final report on the visit will be presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council, at its 63rd session, scheduled to take place in September-October 2026.

## General observations

The presence of Afro-descendants in Mexico is traceable to 1518, the year of the arrival of the first ship with enslaved persons in the Americas. Enslaved men, women and children forcibly laboured in mines, cattle ranches, sugar cane fields and in trade, for more than 311 years. The 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) traces the roots of racism and racial discrimination to slavery and the slave trade that objectified people of African descent. Against all odds, Mexico's history registers the heroic contributions of prominent Mexicans of African descent to public life, including Vicente Guerrero, Gaspar Yanga, José María Morelos, Eduardo Valverde and many more men and women that shaped or are shaping Mexico's society with their advocacy, skills and resilience. The 2020 census results place the population of Afro-Mexicans at 2,576,213 (approximately 2% of the population), however, this figure does not include qualifying persons that chose to identify differently to avoid discrimination, the unreached and the ones that did not participate in the process.

With its 2024 Constitutional amendment, Mexico has taken a historic step forward in the recognition of Afro-descendants and there is momentum for a decisive break with the past, which inhibited Afro-descendants from equal enjoyment of human rights. While embarking on and embracing this journey towards a more inclusive society, in which Afro-descendants would

be fully integrated, Mexico should deepen the evaluation of the current situation in a frank, transparent and inclusive manner, with a view to transforming constitutional commitments into concrete reality. Such a transformative approach requires reforming laws, strengthening institutions and public policies, and embedding a culturally sensitive approach that ensures full, effective and broad-based participation and inclusion of Afro-descendants, based on their free, prior and informed consent including through the adoption of positive measures.

The Working Group acknowledges Mexico's ratification of international and regional human rights protection instruments, and the adoption of legal frameworks against racial discrimination such as the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination, the Mexican Standard on Labour Equality and Discrimination, the Federal Labour Law as well as some policies and programmes such as the National Programme for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2021-2014, the Special Programme for Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples 2021-2024, echoing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. An audit of normative frameworks would examine the consistency of existing law with international standards. The Working Group urges the State to strengthen the institutions that promote and protect human rights, such as the National Council of the Prevention of Discrimination and the National Human Rights Institution, so as to enhance their mandate and capacity for adoption, implementation and monitoring of comprehensive reparation measures and recommendations. These institutions should be allocated with adequate human, financial and technical resources to effectively fulfil their mandate.

Mexico is urged to launch the Second International Decade of People of African Descent and implement its programme of activities while ensuring effective participation of Afro-descendants.

**Recognition, identity and disaggregated data**

The Working Group acknowledges that, in 2020, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) incorporated for the first time in the Population and Housing Census a self-identification question aimed at identifying persons who recognize themselves as Black, Afro-Mexican or of Afro-descendant.

The Working Group learnt that Afro-descendant populations are present in varying numbers throughout the national territory, beyond the states commonly associated with Afro-Mexican peoples, mainly Veracruz, Oaxaca and Guerrero. In this regard, concerns were raised that such presence is not always adequately reflected in the equitable access to public policies, resources and participation mechanisms across the different regions of the country. The fact that many Afro-descendants still do not register or self-identify as such suggests that this does not lead to any positive effects in public governance but to enhanced stigmatisation. This exacerbates underrepresentation.

Afro-Mexican peoples expressed strong reservations about the efficacy of the conflation of institutional mandates for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Mexicans, based on the following grounds:

- There are inherent distinctions of Afro-descendants that are recognised by the Constitution (as culturally differentiated) and require peculiar approaches other than homogenisation and equivalence. They possess distinct historical trajectories, forms of community organization, mechanisms for the transmission of knowledge, their world views, festivities and cultural expressions. These require specific and differentiated responses.
- There are consequential divergences in the progression of the Indigenous People's movement and the momentum of Afro-descendant rights in Mexico, which is still in the

initial stages of achievement. To date, there is an evident prioritisation of concerns of Indigenous Peoples over those of Afro-Mexican peoples;

- Whereas the discourse of Indigenous Peoples is focused on culture and ethnicity; race, rooted in the peculiar history of enslavement, is the basis of victimisation for people of African descent;
- Existing institutions were established without regard for Afro-descendant communities that live in different and sometimes more remote places;
- Afro-Mexican communities shared experiences of racism and racial discrimination from Indigenous Peoples.

The Working Group notes persistent gaps in the collection of disaggregated data concerning Afro-descendant populations in Mexico. The Working Group notes with concern the absence of comprehensive and reliable disaggregated data on Afro-descendant populations in key sectors including political representation and public participation, migration and asylum systems, education, access to justice and cases of disappearances and deprivation of liberty. This limited incorporation of the Afro-descendant variable in official statistics, institutional records and public policy instruments contributes to the invisibilization of racial discrimination and limits the development of evidence-based public policies.

In this regard, the Working Group reiterates the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that Mexico improves systematic data collection, conduct a review of the identity categories and methods of self-identification used in the systematic collection of data. This, with a view to producing reliable, up-to-date, disaggregated and comprehensive information on the ethnic make-up of the State party's population and on the population's socioeconomic situation, including regarding access to employment, education, health services and justice.

**Stereotypes, hate speech and racial profiling**

The Working Group is concerned about the prevalence of racial stereotypes in Mexican society. These include dismissing Afro-Mexicans as foreigners based on their phenotype or skin colour. There are testimonies of Afro-Mexicans persons that faced harsh migration controls, including deportation from their own country. These stereotypes are fed by the exclusion of Afro-descendants from public spaces, ignorance of their contributions to the history and prosperity of the country, and unabated widespread negative and degrading expressions about Afro-descendants in the media. An Afro-Mexican person revealed in a meeting that she and others from her community have received insults on social media suggesting that, as slaves, they were lucky to be allowed to live in Mexico.

Furthermore, despite the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation's judgement declaring generalised migration checks unlawful, racial profiling is reportedly persistent in Mexico, characterised by arbitrary checks and arrests on highways and airports. There are no known protocols or administrative procedures to address the vice.

**Freedom of religion**

The Constitution of Mexico recognizes the right to freedom of ethical convictions, conscience and religion. The Working Group heard that religious and spiritual expressions of African origin continue to be stigmatised, invisibilized and socially rejected. In Veracruz, one organization informed that Afro-diasporic spiritualities were frequently associated with fraudulent or superstitious practices, and that practitioners are subjected to insults, stereotypes, and acts of discrimination.

Information regarding the popular but constrained "Afro Masses" characterised by liturgical celebrations incorporating African and Afro-diasporic cultural elements, including music, dance, and other cultural expressions, was provided to the Working Group. They are occasionally held, as an exception, in around twelve communities and promoted by the Afro-Mexican Pastoral within the Catholic Church. In this context, the Working Group underscores the importance of ensuring that freedom of religion and the right to participate in cultural life are fully guaranteed for Afro-descendants, including through the recognition and respect of spiritual and religious practices of African origin, free from discrimination, stigmatization and intolerance.

**Digital inclusion**

The Working Group heard about territorial inequalities in access to internet and digital services in Afro-descendant communities, particularly in the rural and mountainous regions. This is due to limited and outdated technological infrastructure, unstable connectivity, and frequent power outages, thus affecting access to information, education, public services and online access to justice mechanisms.

This situation reportedly worsens during the rainy season, and communities experience frequent, prolonged power outages, while internet access is intermittent or non-existent in certain areas due to the lack of infrastructure. The monthly cost for accessing internet services by private providers presents a significant economic burden for many families with school going children and adversely affects the right of Afro-descendant children and adolescents to education and digital learning tools.

The Working Group takes note of initiatives aimed at facilitating digital access to public services, including tools and specific guidelines directed at Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Mexicans. Nevertheless, concerns remain regarding the absence of disaggregated information allowing for the assessment of the actual use and accessibility of these services by the Afro-Mexican population.

**Political and public participation and representation**

The Working Group received several testimonies about the lack of adequate participation and representation of Afro-Mexican peoples in political and public spaces. Afro-descendants raised questions about the effective implementation of positive measures, which often results in identity appropriation. Lack of disaggregated data obscures the integration of Afro-Mexicans in public and political affairs. Afro-Mexican peoples and communities deplored the unsatisfactory nature and dismissive approach to consultations with communities, where these occur, for projects and policies affecting them. Given that judges are now elected by popular vote in Mexico, the challenge for Afro-Mexicans in accessing judicial positions is particularly concerning.

**Land, territory and environment**

Environmental justice is a matter of survival for Afro-Mexican peoples. Territorial injustice is a legacy of structured and systemic marginalization that forced Afro-descendants into intensely hazardous environments that have a high propensity to disasters, such as hurricanes of increasing levels and earthquakes, as well as unfavourable living conditions, such as pollution and very high temperatures. This is intensified by climate change and the State's lack of attention to its effects on the populations along the coast. Lives and livelihoods are frequently lost due to unavailable or delayed emergency responses, inappropriate construction practices, destruction of lagoons that has adversely affected fish reserves, destruction of the mangroves and loss of shorelines to rising tides. There are no known preventive or structured government

programmes or approaches to these issues. On the other hand, mega projects by private actors proceed without consultation or without being integrated into existing eco-systems.

The Working Group is concerned about the disproportionate environmental and socio-economic impacts affecting Afro-descendant communities in different regions of Mexico. In Veracruz, complaints were raised about the pollution of rivers by corporations, which contaminate the water used for agricultural irrigation and harvesting and may be linked to illnesses and deaths in nearby communities. Communities raised concerns about the situation of agricultural workers employed in the sugar industry, including deaths allegedly resulting from extreme heat conditions during production processes.

In Oaxaca, the Working Group received information regarding serious infrastructure deficiencies and vulnerabilities related to climate change and natural disasters, particularly in communities in the municipality of Villa de Tututepec, including Chacahua Island. Community representatives highlighted problems related to inadequate waste collection systems, unstable electricity supply, limited access to healthcare services and the absence of adequate, prompt emergency response mechanisms such as emergency shelters and emergency plans to respond to hurricanes and other climate-related disasters, significantly increasing risks for affected communities. According to the information received, in rural communities in Oaxaca, schools are being used as temporary shelters despite lacking adequate conditions for this purpose. Following Hurricane Eric, communities reportedly suffered significant destruction of homes and schools, while State reconstruction assistance was described as insufficient. Some communities also reportedly remain isolated from public services during periods of heavy rainfall, due to poor road conditions and limited transport infrastructure.

Local authorities and representatives reported that, in some Afro-descendant communities, potable water distribution infrastructure is severely deteriorated, water supply is insufficient, and access to safe drinking water is limited. The Working Group heard about the increasing privatization of water services and the obstacles faced in accessing alternatives, such as drilling boreholes.

The Working Group received information that there are approximately 180 agrarian nuclei with Afro-descendant populations at the national level. While authorities referred to prior, free and informed consultation mechanisms for projects affecting these territories, the Working Group heard testimonies expressing concerns about administrative obstacles preventing some communities from formally registering as Afro-descendant communities.

**Access to justice**

The quest for justice among Afro-Mexican people is shaped by historical legacies and ongoing patterns of institutional violence. These are reported to include State neglect and abandonment; limited access to essential services owing to inaccessibility, unavailability, delays or denials; chronic under-resourcing; and discrimination, including social exclusion and the treatment of Afro-Mexicans as foreigners. The Working Group also received information on violations of personal autonomy, inadequate environmental protection and crime prevention, profiling, and the application of degrading migration controls, including reports of arbitrary detention and deportation of Afro-Mexicans. Disaster-preparedness and response measures were described as insufficient and discriminatory. Justice mechanisms remain largely inaccessible to Afro-Mexican people and communities due to their complexity, limited geographical reach, lack of information, and low levels of trust in their effectiveness. The absence of Afro-Mexican representation within relevant institutions further contributes to alienation. The Working Group heard accounts of persistent impunity and alleged complicity of some authorities in cases of enforced disappearances and violence against Afro-territorial defenders in Acapulco.

The Working Group was astonished by allegations of harassment, institutional persecution and risks of eviction affecting Afro-descendant families with strong links to a historical and cultural community space called El Patio de la Estrella, in Córdoba, Veracruz. This is reportedly occurring in the context of tourism-driven urban development and gentrification processes, disproportionately affecting historically marginalized communities. The authorities need to desist from further interference with the peaceful tenure of these families.

**Education**

Education has three key functions in advancing Mexico's Constitutional commitment:

i) Education of Afro-Mexicans: equip Afro-Mexican peoples with knowledge, including about their rights under article 2 of the Constitution, the cultural infrastructure and skills of a competitive parity of esteem to participate in all sectors nationally.

ii) Education about Afro-Mexicans: This also involves specialised research and budgeting for research on Afro-Mexican peoples as well as sensitising the public about the history and contributions of Afro-descendants to Mexico. Include visual arts, poetry, artistic expressions in teacher training and the curriculum of basic education to enhance the cultural infrastructure for inclusivity.

iii) Education for Afro-Mexicans: foster cultural change in Mexico's general population by promoting the right of all persons against racial discrimination and descent-based discrimination.

Structural racism constitutes a significant barrier to access to education and contributes to the disproportionately low educational attainment of Afro-Mexican people in Mexico, including low completion rates and high levels of school dropout. The Working Group received information that these outcomes are linked to multiple factors, notably experiences of racist bullying, including by peers and, in some cases, by teachers and academic staff. Additional challenges include inadequate educational infrastructure, such as poorly maintained and unsuitable classrooms; insufficient school supplies; and the limited financial capacity of families to meet indirect education-related costs, including internet access. Reports also highlighted linguistic discrimination, discrimination based on physical appearance, including hair, and the impact of insecurity and organized crime on school attendance and retention. More broadly, concerns were raised regarding the use of education systems in ways that may perpetuate existing racial and ethnic hierarchies.

**Health**

Current realities raise the concern of the Working Group about the health and health care of Afro-Mexican populations. Community access to second level hospitals in Veracruz, Oaxaca and Guerrero is limited, with recourse to health facilities with dilapidated infrastructure, overwhelmed few staff of limited competencies and no specialised services. This results in challenges regarding maternal health care, mental health care, and the treatment of some chronic diseases such as high bold pressure or diabetes. The Working Group was informed that mental health is neglected by authorities and is affected by greater exposure to causal factors, including racial stress, anxiety and transgenerational trauma, exacerbated by frequent experiences or expectation of race-based violence in society; each natural disaster also leaves emotional scars and lasting traumatic memories.

**Memory, truth and reparations**

Afro-Mexican peoples describe reparatory justice to include concrete measures of recognition, community entrepreneurship, cooperatives, self-sufficiency, and self-governance; guarantees of control and ownership of means of capital, including land, credit and the markets; a

reparation-based approach to justice plans that guarantee the prior, free and informed consent of Afro-Mexican peoples; a distinctive and differentiated approach to Afro- Mexican affairs; education of, about, for, and by Afro-Mexican peoples, including an Afro-Mexican Peoples' Museum and consolidation of archives on Afro-Mexican communities.

**Women and girls of African descent**

The Working Group takes note of initiatives by Mexico to promote the contributions of Afro-descendant women, including the creation of the National Prize for the Promotion of the Rights of Afro-Mexican Women by the Ministry of Women and the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI). However, Afro-descendant women and girls continue to be subjected to hyper-sexualization, racial stereotypes and sexual and physical violence. This reality highlights the persistence of historical and colonial narratives portraying Afro-descendant women as sexually available, contributing to specific forms of violence and discrimination. The Working Group further notes the existence of obstacles in access to protection mechanisms for Afro-descendant women and girl victims of violence, as well the scarcity of available shelters.

The Working Group expresses its concern about the persistence of obstetric violence and discriminatory practices within healthcare services, including reports of stereotypes suggesting that "Black women can endure more pain", resulting in delays in medical attention and discriminatory treatment during pregnancy and childbirth. It also notes the high rates of adolescent pregnancy in Afro-Mexican communities and underscores the urgent need to strengthen culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive education policies. The lack of comprehensive and reliable disaggregated official data to assess the extent of early pregnancy among Afro-descendant girls and adolescents is a matter of deep concern for the Working Group.

The Working Group takes note of the presence and participation of some Afro-descendant women in health institutions. However, it considers that further efforts are needed to increase their effective participation and mobility in all sectors of Mexican society.

**Children and youth of African descent**

A survey confirmed that Afro-descendant adolescents are disproportionately affected by violence in custody. The death of two Haitian girls in a situation of human mobility while under the custody of a State social assistance institution in the state of Oaxaca is particularly concerning. The girls reportedly fell into a water cistern inside a transit centre administered by the National System for Integral Family Development (DIF), in circumstances that reportedly revealed deficiencies in protection, supervision and safety measures.

There are reported cases of racial discrimination and bullying of Afro-descendant migrant children and adolescents, related to their skin colour, hair, phenotype, and manner of speaking Spanish. The Working Group was informed of cases in which educational institutions had requested children to cut off their hair in order to make space in classrooms.

In communities affected by extreme climate events, the Working Group heard that hurricanes and flooding damage recreational and sports spaces used by youth, including sports fields and community outdoor spaces. Concerns were also raised regarding the disproportionate impact of organized crime on Afro-descendant youth living in contexts of poverty and social exclusion.

**LGBTIQ+ persons of African descent**

Afro-Mexican LGBTIQ+ persons face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination linked to racism, homophobia and transphobia. These dynamics of exclusion significantly affect their daily lives, employment opportunities, community participation and full enjoyment

of their human rights. The Working Group received testimonies regarding obstacles in access to healthcare services for Afro-descendant LGBTIQ+ persons living with HIV, particularly in rural areas. The absence of hospitals, together with deficiencies in the functioning of healthcare centres, limits access to treatment, specialized care and adequate health services. Trans persons in an irregular migration situation face additional obstacles in accessing procedures for the legal recognition of gender identity, including changes of name and sex in official documents.

**Migration and borders**

Afro-descendants in situations of human mobility in Mexico face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, institutional racism and violence, particularly in their interactions with migration and security authorities. These practices do not constitute isolated incidents, but rather structural patterns linked to the tightening of migration and security policies.

Particularly, Haitians and persons originating from African countries are reportedly subjected to racial profiling practices in a disproportionate manner, selective identity checks, arbitrary detentions and excessive use of force in public spaces, roads, airports and migration operations. These practices are reportedly based on racial prejudice and stereotypical associations between Blackness, criminality and irregular migration status. In addition, disaggregated data on unaccompanied Afro-descendant migrant adolescents are unavailable and asylum procedures do not guarantee legal safeguards.

**Recommendations**

The Working Group urges the Government of Mexico to:

- Undertake a consultative, evidence-based process to clarify the role of legislation within Mexico's new constitutional framework, with a view to:
    - identifying and repealing or amending existing laws that, in content or effect, perpetuate discrimination against Afro-Mexican peoples and people of African descent;
    - identifying and addressing gaps in legislation to advance positive measures, a differentiated approach, and Mexico's commitments to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of people of African descent;
    - strengthening positive measures in the public and private sectors;
    - building institutional capacity to ensure the full inclusion and participation of Afro-Mexican peoples in all sectors and at all levels of Mexican society; and
    - enhancing access to justice and effective remedies for violations, including, as appropriate, reparatory justice.
- Remove administrative barriers and other obstacles to the registration of communities.
- Adopt firm measures to combat stereotypes, negative perceptions and degrading expressions directed at people of African descent, including by monitoring hate speech online, implementing education programmes and awareness-raising initiatives (including an Afro-Mexican Peoples' museum), and ensuring accessible complaint mechanisms and effective remedies.
- Collect racially disaggregated data on racial profiling; establish protocols and mandatory training for officials in areas at heightened risk; and streamline procedures, including through appropriate sanctions against perpetrators.
- Take urgent steps to ensure the right to safe and clean water, including by upgrading water, electricity and communications infrastructure in affected regions.

- Ensure the legitimacy of community representation through transparent and participatory processes and strengthen the presence and participation of Afro-Mexican peoples in all areas of public and political life.
- Establish protocols to guarantee the right to free, prior, and informed consent in relevant decision-making processes.
- Ensure that mining corporations operating in affected regions prevent and mitigate the adverse impacts of their activities on neighbouring communities and provide compensation to those affected.
- Restore and sustain effective State presence, functionality and governance in essential sectors—health, education, transport, preventive environmental (disaster-risk) management, energy, water and sanitation—in regions inhabited by people of African descent.
- Adopt effective measures to protect communities at risk of natural disasters and establish adequate and efficient prevention mechanisms, including emergency plans, and building standards and enforcement practices that respect local knowledge and practices.
- Ensure full realisation in practice of universal and compulsory access to basic education; undertake curriculum reform that includes the history and contributions of people of African descent; and address barriers to higher and continuing adult education, with particular attention to the factors contributing to school dropout.
- Urgently ensure equitable access to health care, supported by adequate budgetary allocations; deploy sufficient numbers of trained medical personnel in regions inhabited by large proportions of Afro-Mexicans to make the right to health accessible, available, acceptable and affordable for all; and address mental health needs in a serious and sustained manner.
- Adopt a reparation-based, anti-racism and anti-discrimination approach to public administration, including mandatory training, positive measures and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Develop and implement a Victims of Violence Charter guaranteeing protective measures, with special attention to Afro-descendant women and girls who are victims of violence.
- Ensure the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls of African descent, including through education and access to contraception.
- Align migration laws, policies and practices with international standards.
- Ensure that State institutions, policies and programmes do not subsume or conflate the rights and specificities of people of African descent within those of Indigenous Peoples, and instead fully recognise and address their distinct legal, historical and contemporary experiences of racial discrimination, including through dedicated laws, institutional arrangements, targeted measures and effective participation.