



Gender-based Violence, Structural Racism, and Racial Discrimination: New General Recommendation from the MESECVI Addresses Specific Violence Against Afro-descendant Women and Proposes Resources for Its Elimination

Washington, D.C., July 29, 2024. Afro-descendant women face aggravated forms of violence as a result of the intersection of racism and gender discrimination, which must be addressed by the States and societies of Latin America and the Caribbean from an ethnic-racial, human rights, gender, and intersectional perspective. Adopting this framework, the new General Recommendation by the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) proposes a series of measures to move towards the eradication of violence against Afro-descendant women and girls, based on the highest international and inter-American standards.

The publication, developed thanks to a partnership between MESECVI, the Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Network of Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and Diaspora Women, was presented last Wednesday, July 24, during a virtual event with the participation of representatives from States in the region, Afro-descendant women's organizations and civil society, and international organizations.

During the event, the importance of having this new legal tool was highlighted, which presents 52 recommendations that serve as a guide to make visible, prevent, address, sanction, and repair the differentiated violence faced by Afro-descendant women.

This instrument arises from the concern expressed by the MESECVI Committee of Experts about the special vulnerability of Afro-descendant women in the region, who face more severe poverty than men, as well as greater obstacles in accessing education, health, decent work, adequate housing, and fully exercising their sexual and reproductive rights, among others.

According to [regional data from UNFPA](#), 6 out of 10 Afro-descendant women have experienced violence throughout their lives, with higher prevalence in educational and workplace settings. Additionally, 23 percent of Afro-descendant women have suffered sexual harassment, and more than 74 percent have not reported acts of violence against them for fear of not being believed or being revictimized.

In this context, the General Recommendation analyzes the roots of historical violence based on structural racism, racial discrimination, and gender. The Committee of Experts stresses the need to adopt an intersectional approach and guarantee the participation of Afro-

descendant women in addressing the violence that affects them as an essential condition for ensuring that actions, public policies, plans and legislation contribute effectively to the elimination of violence against them.

During the presentation of the document, various interventions highlighted the centrality of the experiences of Afro-descendant women and the importance of this document in influencing the actions of States throughout the region.

The President of the MESECVI Committee of Experts, Gloria Camacho, emphasized that: “States must ensure the active participation of Afro-descendant women leaders and organizations. Only through this inclusion will it be possible to guarantee that the disproportionate violence and the absence of data and statistics on the situation of Afro-descendant women do not continue to occur.”

Meanwhile, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, Alejandra Mora, stressed that: “Introducing an intersectional and gender perspective is crucial to make visible the consequences of systemic racism and racial discrimination on the exercise of the rights of Afro-descendant women.”

UNFPA’s Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Susana Sottoli, highlighted that: “This recommendation is an opportunity for States as it translates into a roadmap to address these particular forms of violence within their regulatory frameworks, public policies, and budgets.”

Finally, Paola Yáñez, Coordinator of the Network of Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and Diaspora Women, insisted that: “This recommendation is a milestone for Afro-descendant women because it is a substantive advance for the protection of their rights. We must move towards a real intersectional approach.”

In this regard, it is worth noting the key role played by the aforementioned Network of Women in the process of drafting the General Recommendation, ensuring the participation of Afro-descendant women throughout the region. During this process, the experts also listened to the voices of Afro-Brazilian women, ensuring that this document would take into account their experiences to enrich the analysis and recommendations.

Download the [General Recommendation of the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI \(No. 5\): Gender-Based Violence Against Afro-Descendant Women](#). (Available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish).

You can watch [the virtual presentation](#) event here.