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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

More international support needed to improve the situation of people with albinism

The killing and stigmatization of people with albinism still is a massive problem, especially in many East and Southern African countries. The killing of Madalitso Pensulo, a 19-year old man with Albinism in Mlonda village in Malawi on January 10, 2017, highlighted the extremely dangerous living conditions of people with albinism. More than 600 attacks on people with albinism have been registered in 26 countries since 2007, with almost two-thirds of the victims being children. The real figure of attacks even might be higher, because many victims and their families are reluctant to complain about intimidations, death threats or physical violence. Sometimes family members even are involved in human trafficking of murdered young children or their bones. We were deeply shocked to learn that incidents of exhuming albino bodies by criminals and bone merchants have increased in Tanzania and other countries in the years 2015 and 2016.

In the year 2016 a massive wave of violence against people with albinism in Malawi and Mozambique has led to an impressive public debate on the failure of government institutions and the justice system to provide protection. We are lauding public initiatives of the Musicians Union of Malawi to organize a solidarity march to highlight the scourge of murders affecting people with albinism. The decision of the musicians, not to remain silent on the sensitive issue, is extremely important to contribute to a broader knowledge of the problems of people with albinism and to improve their integration in society.

Many governments still not are paying sufficient attention to the problems of people with albinism. They only are reacting on international pressure after horrendous murders. Therefore the initiative of Kenya's first albino lawmaker, Isaac Mwaura, to organize the first beauty pageant of people with albinism in Kenya in October 2016 has to be lauded. The young albino men and women competed for the title of Miss and Mister Albinism Kenya, in order to show that people with albinism should not hide in their houses and avoid the public, but show their talent and beauty.

The massive public debate in Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi has led to a certain drop of violent attacks against people with albinism. But even in these countries, the greater awareness of the disastrous livelihood of people with albinism has not led to a sensitive improvement of their protection and integration in society. Much more has to be done by the governments of these states and by the international community.

Society for Threatened Peoples is commending the efforts of the UN Independent Expert to organize conferences with African governments, NGOs and leading representatives and well known public voices of people with albinism to establish a roadmap to improve their situation and their integration in society. African countries should come together and confront the root causes of the on-going discrimination and violence and should seek for measures to effectively promote the respect and rights of people with albinism. But African countries need more international financial support to ensure an effective protection of people with albinism and the full enjoyment of their rights. Financial support is urgently needed for trauma healing for the victims of attacks, for cancer prevention and medical treatment and for a better integration in schools and society. Furthermore, the protection of people with albinism in isolated rural areas has to be increased.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council:

- To urge all governments to increase their efforts in eradicating violence and segregation of people with albinism,
 - To offer more financial support for a better integration and protection of people with albinism,
 - To massively support the efforts of the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism to establish in cooperation with governments, NGOs and credible representatives of concerned people a roadmap with concrete steps and initiatives to promote the rights of people with albinism.
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