

For International Albinism Awareness Day – Monday 13 June

“Light in darkness for persons with albinism” – UN experts hail progress despite dire obstacles

GENEVA (10 June 2016) – *Speaking ahead of International Albinism Awareness Day on Monday 13 June, a group of seven United Nations human rights experts* hails the fast-growing movement to defend the human rights of persons with albinism, and their increased engagement to fight for their rights. However, they warn that the way ahead is still long and fraught with hurdles.*

“On this second International Albinism Awareness Day, we celebrate persons with albinism who have overcome tremendous challenges to de-mystify albinism using the example of their lives.

These include Tanzania’s first Deputy Minister of State with albinism, Abdallah Possi and Kenya’s Member of Parliament with albinism, Isaac Mwaura.

Supermodels with albinism are also shattering stereotypes. From the United States of America, Hong Kong and South Africa, these models both humanize the uniqueness of albinism and showcase its beauty in a world that has ridiculed and misunderstood the condition for centuries.

Artists in various walks of life including the notable Salif Keita of Mali, Yellowman of Jamaica, the Winter brothers of the USA, have all paved the way for new voices such as that of Moses Swaray in Liberia and Keisha of Tanzania.

In sports, persons with albinism compete with success, such as gold medalist skier, Kelly Gallagher, and the well-known wrestling champion, Mwimba Texas from the DR Congo.

There are also numerous persons with albinism leading diplomatic offices, and those at the helm of civil society, leading non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and religious communities across the world.

These success stories were far less only five years ago. The increase today is a testament to the fruit of heightened awareness-raising activity around the world.

But despite these successes, it remains a serious matter of concern that, since the first International Day was celebrated last year, physical attacks against persons with albinism, particularly women and children, continue and have now been reported in areas and countries where it was believed not to have been an issue.

New cases of violence show that a lot of work remains to be done to bring tangible hope and change to the lives of persons with albinism, who continue to suffer discrimination and live in fear of attack. Moreover too often persons with albinism are not provided with

reasonable accommodation for their visual impairment and do not have access to adequate health care.

In a time when diversity is celebrated, no one should be cast out, violated or attacked due to their appearance. As deep efforts in human rights have been made, persons with albinism should be enjoying the fruits of these efforts.

The road ahead toward achieving this goal is long yet possible. The success of those with albinism who have overcome formidable challenges and the commendable efforts made by some States on the issue are both a good beginning and a ray of hope.”

(*) **The experts:** **Ms. Ikponwosa Ero**, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism; **Ms. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye**, Special Rapporteur on minority issues; **Mr. Juan E. Méndez**, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; **Mr. Dainius Pūras**, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; **Mr. Mutuma Ruteere**, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; **Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar**, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; and **Ms. Dubravka Šimonović**, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

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Check the special website: “People with albinism: not ghosts, but human beings - <http://albinism.ohchr.org/>

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