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SPECIAL PROCEDURES
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Statement by the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond

GENEVA 11 June 2025

International Albinism Awareness Day – 13 June 2025

Eleven years ago today, the United Nations General Assembly set aside 13 June as International Albinism Awareness Day–IAAD. As we commemorate this day, we take a sober reflection on the remarkable journey undertaken during this time, progress made through collective efforts both at the national and international levels, and ongoing challenges that spur us to redouble our efforts in persistently highlighting and finding solutions to the complexities, intersectionalities, and diverse human rights concerns that confront persons with albinism around the world.

In light of the growing impact of the global climate crisis on persons with albinism, this year's theme is named: **"Demanding our rights: Protect our skin, Preserve our lives."** The theme spotlights the collective and urgent need for continuous awareness of the persisting health concerns and the urge for improved access to essential healthcare for persons with albinism, whose genetic lack of melanin combined with the worsening effects of climate change, make them susceptible to sunburn and skin-related health conditions, including skin cancer. In fact, current research shows that there are more deaths of persons with albinism caused by skin cancer than through ritual attacks and killings. And yet this grim reality can be prevented, but if only skin cancer is prioritised and treated as a health emergency of global concern for persons with albinism.

Indeed, demanding access to health care for persons with albinism is not calling for what is beyond reach. It is a right which encompasses dignity and survival and could be partly realised with as little as providing access to a simple bottle of life-saving sunscreen, which still remains out of reach for many persons with albinism in certain regions. Even for those with enough earnings to buy sunscreen, it may not be readily available and not of the desired quality.

In the implementation of my mandate, I have engaged and interacted with people and communities and undertaken country visits across continents. In these interactions, I have seen first-hand, the many lives that can be positively impacted by freely available and quality sunscreen. Those whom I met and who were in dire need of sunscreen are the constituents that motivated me to collaborate with the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and other albinism organisations to submit a joint application to the WHO to add sunscreen to the Essential Medicines Lists. While we await a decision on this process, I reiterate my call on governments to make the necessary legislative and policy changes to ensure availability of sunscreen on national essential medicines lists.

As we commemorate today, we must also renew our call for bold action around the world as persons with albinism continue to suffer discrimination, violence, marginalization and social

exclusion due to misunderstanding, deeply entrenched prejudices and stereotypes. Persons with albinism also face significant barriers restricting their participation in society on an equal basis with others and preventing them from realising basic rights such as the right to physical and mental health, right to education, as well as access to social services, legal protection, and redress for rights abuses. Socio-economic disparities, including limited employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors, have been part of the daily struggles for persons with albinism.

Despite the multiple challenges persons with albinism face, considerable progress has been made in the areas of policy and legislative reform to make education and employment more accessible, while also tackling discrimination, violence and prejudice. More than ever before, the albinism movement has become more visible and vocal, and its voices penetrating the fortresses of political and economic power. This has been possible, in part, due to the remarkable resilience, commitment and devotion to the struggle by persons with albinism—and their constituents of support—who continue to break down barriers and surmount challenges as parents, activists and human rights defenders.

So, in commemorating this day, I encourage each and every one of you to continue to strive toward a common goal of improving the human rights situation of persons with albinism and thereby helping create a world where the rights and dignity of all is a primary focus rather than an afterthought. In this regard, we must underline the significant positive impact that collective efforts and deeper partnerships can play in realising this goal. With dedication, continued advocacy and a unified front, we can create a better world for persons with albinism to live in peace, freedom and dignity.

While wishing you a happy International Albinism Awareness Day, I remain profoundly touched by the efforts of all of you and would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the work you have done, memories you have created, and the inspiration you have embodied.

Thank you!

The experts:

Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism (www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-albinism)

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