**Commonwealth Disabled People’s Statement on combatting Racism, Supporting Black Lives Matter and accelerating race equality and decolonization of the media, culture and school and college curricula throughout the Commonwealth.**

The Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum representing the more than 450 million disabled people in 54 countries of the Commonwealth support the current global protests against racism. We further recognise the impact on disabled people of the history of racism in the Commonwealth and the need to challenge the impact of colonisation, dispossession, current and historical colonial acts of oppression, and continuing injustice and inequality especially to indigenous peoples. The CDPF works to ensure that measures are in place to address these issues so that reconciliation can take place.(Constitutional Object 3.i of CDPF).

We further recognize and reaffirm the Lusaka Declaration of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (1979),which helped created a climate to get rid of apartheid in South Africa, but was aimed at all countries. The Declaration committed the Commonwealth:

“United in our desire to rid the world of the evils of racism and racial prejudice, we proclaim our faith in the

inherent dignity and worth of the human person and declare that:

1. the peoples of the Commonwealth have the right to live freely in dignity and equality, without any distinction or exclusion based on race, colour, sex, descent, or national or ethnic origin;

2. while everyone is free to retain diversity in his or her culture and lifestyle, this diversity does not justify the perpetuation of racial prejudice or racially discriminatory practices;

3. everyone has the right to equality before the law and equal justice under the law;

4. everyone has the right to effective remedies and protection against any form of discrimination based on the grounds of race, colour, sex, descent, or national or ethnic origin” and ….

“We reaffirm that it is the duty of all the peoples of the Commonwealth to work together for the total eradication of the infamous policy of apartheid which is internationally recognised as a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind and the very existence of which is an affront to humanity.

We agree that everyone has the right to protection against acts of incitement to racial hatred and discrimination, whether committed by individuals, groups or other organisations.

We affirm that there should be no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, descent or national or ethnic origin in the acquisition or exercise of the right to vote; in the field of civil rights or access to citizenship; or in the economic, social or cultural fields, particularly education, health, employment, occupation, housing, social security and cultural life.

We attach particular importance to ensuring that children shall be protected from practices which may foster racism or racial prejudice. Children have the right to be brought up and educated in a spirit of tolerance and understanding so as to be able to contribute fully to the building of future societies based on justice and friendship.

We believe that those groups in societies who may be especially disadvantaged because of residual racist attitudes are entitled to the fullest protection of the law.

We recognise that the history of the Commonwealth and its diversity require that special attention should be paid to the problems of indigenous minorities. We recognise that the same special attention should be paid to the problems of immigrants, immigrant workers and refugees”.

The CDPF recognise that 40 years of free market economics, globalisation and COVID-19 have acted to increase racism and further marginalise many social groups, especially disabled people and that false science and outdated racist tropes and stereotypes are again circulating in the media magnified by the new largely uncontrolled social media.

The CDPF calls on all civil society organisations and the leaders of Commonwealth countries to:-

* Declare their support for ‘Black Lives Matter’ and promote racial and ethnic harmony
* Work with community organisations and educators to decolonise school and college curricula
* Ensure that galleries, museums and public statues recount the real history of colonialism, slavery and empire
* Promote a spirit of peace, environmental sustainability, reconciliation and collaboration.
* Ensure reparations are made to indigenous and minority ethnic peoples wronged by colonialism
* Ensure laws are in place and prosecutions carried out to those who peddle race hatred
* Governments to challenge institutional racism in the police and other state agencies.
* Ongoing equality training is established for all Parliamentarians, civil servants, professionals and business managers.