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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OACPS, H.E. MR. GEORGES REBELO PINTO CHIKOTI, ON THE CELEBRATION OF NELSON MANDELA DAY

Brussels, 18 July 2021/OACPS: On the occasion of Nelson Mandela Day, observed annually on July 18, the Secretary-General, H. E. Mr. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, on behalf of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), underlines the importance of this historic day when the world celebrates the life and teachings of this global icon of peace and reconciliation, President Nelson Mandela.

The Secretary-General recalls the life of Nelson Mandela with deep admiration for the values he fought for, his selfless sacrifice, the steadfast dedication to the struggle for freedom, and commitment to human rights that set him apart from the rest of humankind.

H.E. Chikoti welcomes the choice of the theme for the 2021 Nelson Mandela Day celebrations, "*One hand can feed another*"; as a timely reminder in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that has seen an increasing number of countries face growing food shortages, acute food insecurity, and the reversal of years of development gains. The Secretary-General acknowledges that the theme inspires us all to embrace President Mandela's legacy of compassion and dedication to the service of humanity in the fight against poverty. He calls for the urgent need to ensure food security and nutrition for all, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable, who remain at the centre of all efforts to 'build back better'.

As we celebrate also the Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace (2019 – 2028), which salutes President Mandela's contribution to the struggle for democracy in his native South Africa and the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world, Secretary-General Chikoti condemns the recent outbreaks of violence in South Africa which have led, *inter alia*, to loss of life, lawlessness and widespread looting.

Secretary-General Chikoti reaffirms the OACPS' solidarity with the international community and calls for everyone, to use this day to recall and take to heart the example set by President Mandela in choosing to seek peaceful and democratic solutions as a means to resolve social injustice, and to build a fairer and better world.

In Madiba's own words, "It is easy to break down and destroy. The heroes are those who make peace and build."

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