



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

31 October 2014

Excellency,

I refer to resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013 by which the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent, commencing on 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2024, with the theme “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”.

In accordance with the aforementioned resolution, I have the honour to inform that I will launch the International Decade for People of African Descent at an event to be convened on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014 at 3:00 p.m. at the Trusteeship Council Chamber. A Concept Note and Provisional Programme for the Launch are included herewith for your reference. A more detailed Final Programme will be circulated in due course.

Delegations are invited to be represented at the highest possible level at the Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam K. Kutesa

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

CONCEPT NOTE

Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent

10 December 2014

3:00 p.m.

Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations

Background

The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was a historic opportunity to acknowledge the burdens faced by people of African descent as a result of the legacies of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism. Despite efforts to mobilize political will at the national, regional and international levels, thirteen years after the World Conference against Racism and the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the discrimination faced by people of African Descent continues to manifest in situations of limited access to quality education, employment, security and vulnerability to violence based on colour or ethnicity.

Non-discrimination and equality before and of the law constitute fundamental principles of international human rights law, and underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the main international human rights treaties and instruments. Accordingly, in the face of the realities of racism and structural and institutional discrimination against people of African descent, the international community has declared the promotion and protection of the human rights of people of African descent to be a matter of priority concern.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent with the aim of strengthening national actions and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African descent in relation to their full enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights; their participation and integration in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society; and the promotion of a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture.

Following on the International Year, the General Assembly, by its resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013, proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent commencing 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2024, with the theme "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development".

Objective

The main objective of the International Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Decade shall focus on the following objectives:

- a. To strengthen national, regional and international action and cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic , social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- b. To promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- c. To adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

The International Decade is a timely and important initiative and a unique opportunity to underline the significant contribution made by people of African descent to our societies and to propose concrete measures to promote their full inclusion and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The International Decade will enable the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development. The programme of activities recognizes that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is a comprehensive United Nations framework and a solid foundation for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and represent a new stage in the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to restore the rights and dignity of people of African descent.

The United Nations Department of Public Information manages a programme of education outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery to increase awareness of and educate future generations about the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice. The educational programme is also used to enhance awareness of the Permanent Memorial at United Nations Headquarters to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Slave Route Project celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2014. Activities developed by both programmes could also be used to raise awareness and provide a framework for activities organized in support of the International Decade.

Format

The President of the 69th session of the General Assembly will preside over the official Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent at an event to be held at the United Nations on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014 at 3:00 p.m.

The Launch will include brief remarks from the President of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, The Director-General of UNESCO, the Chairperson of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the coordinators of major groups represented at the United Nations have also been invited to present remarks, not exceeding ten minutes. There will also be a featured speaker and musical performances.

Participation

Member States and Observers are encouraged to be represented at the highest possible level. United Nations entities, intergovernmental, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant stakeholders are invited also to be present at the highest possible level.

Website and Media

Website

The website for the International Decade is being developed by the Department of Public Information (DPI) and is expected to be launched in early December prior to the formal launch of the Decade.

Media

A media advisory, highlighting the details of the programme will be issued ahead of the event. A press conference will be held on the day of the launch, and a press release will be issued.

Social Media

A social media campaign will be conducted through the various UN institutional accounts to promote the launch of the Decade and raise awareness on the struggles and contributions of People of African Descent, as well as the objectives of the Decade.

UN Information Centres

UN Information Centres and Offices worldwide will be requested to undertake promotional and public awareness activities focusing on the objectives of the Decade and the role of Member States in their implementation.

Provisional Programme

Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent

10 December 2014

3:00 p.m.

Trusteeship Council Chamber

3:00 p.m.	<u>Musical introduction</u>
3:10 p.m.	<u>Remarks:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly• H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (TBC)• H.E. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights• H.E. Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (TBC)• Ms. Mireille Fanon-Mendes, Chairperson, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent• Mr. Mohamed Siad Douale, Chairperson, Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action• Civil society representative (TBC)• Featured speaker (TBC)• Major group statements<ul style="list-style-type: none">- African Group- CARICOM- EU- G77 and China• Representative of the United States (TBC)• Representative of South Africa• Representative of Brazil
5:45 p.m.	<u>Musical finale</u>
5:55 p.m.	<u>Closure of Launch</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Sam K. Kutesa

Programme
 Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent
"People of African Descent: recognition, justice and development"
 10 December 2014
 3:00 p.m.
 Trusteeship Council Chamber

2:50 – 3:05 p.m.	Drums prelude
3:05 p.m.	Musical introduction
3:10 p.m.	<p>Remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly • Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator • Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights • <i>Video message from H.E. Irina Bokova</i>, Director-General of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization • Ms. Mireille Fanon Mendes France, Chairperson, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent • Mr. Mohamed Siad Douale, Chairperson, Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action • Dr. Barryl Biekman, Tiye International (civil society representative) <p><i>Keynote speaker</i> Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Principal and Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of the West Indies</p> <p>Musical interlude</p> <p>Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Samantha Power, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations and a member of President Obama's Cabinet • H.E. Hon. Tshililo Michael Masutha, Minister of Justice and Correctional Services of South Africa • H.E. Hon. Luiza Bairros, Minister for the Promotion of Policies on Racial Equality of Brazil • H.E. Hon. Paolo Gentiloni, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy • H.E. Hon. Guillermina Mekuy Mba Obono, Minister of Culture and Tourism of Equatorial Guinea • H.E. Hon. Carmen Ines Vasquez, Vice Minister of Participation and Equity, Ministry of the Interior of Colombia • G77 and China • African Group • CARICOM • EU
5:50 p.m.	Musical finale
6:00 p.m.	<p>Closure of Launch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Sam K. Kutesa

10 December 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Launch of the International Decade for People of African
Descent**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today as the United Nations officially launches the International Decade for People of African Descent.

I thank the South African delegation and, in particular, Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations for his able leadership on this issue.

I wish to acknowledge the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who has been designated as the coordinator of the Decade. I also thank the representatives of the Durban mechanisms who are with us today, including the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) for their work on the development of the programme of activities of the Decade and in support of implementation of the DDPA.

Several of us have just come from a pledging event for the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The Permanent Memorial, titled, “The Ark of Return”, was designed by Rodney Leon, who is from Haiti and of African descent.

We are joined here today by Mr. Leon and I wish to congratulate him on this important accomplishment. The Permanent Memorial, which will be installed here on the grounds of the United Nations, will promote greater recognition of the contributions that enslaved Africans and their descendants have made to their respective societies.

Esteemed Colleagues,

The launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent is indeed a historic moment and a significant achievement. Human rights issues affecting people of African descent are present on every continent. Through the launch of this Decade, the General Assembly is signifying that issues affecting people of African descent are of worldwide concern, and not solely a problem of the Americas.

During this Decade and beyond, there is much to be done by a wide range of actors; including Governments, the United Nations system, civil society, communities and individuals. Through the

effective observance of the Decade, we have been presented with an important opportunity to create synergy in the effort to combat racism, while also contributing to the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Today we are joined by many leaders who have committed their lives to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. These individuals have worked tirelessly to reaffirm the principles of equality and non-discrimination contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Over the next ten years, people everywhere are encouraged to take part in a global conversation on the realities faced by people of African descent. The Decade will allow us to explore the challenges faced by people of African descent due to pervasive racism and racial discrimination engrained in our societies.

The theme of the International Decade: “recognition, justice and development”, provides an excellent platform for that global conversation to take place. This theme has elements that I would like to focus on individually.

On the matter of recognition, in 2001, the international community adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The DDPA confirmed what we all know to be true; that people of African descent still suffer from residual consequences due to slavery, the slave trade and colonialism.

Furthermore, it was acknowledged that racism exists in all countries, in all regions; and that fighting racism must be an international priority. As we launch this International Decade, we must work to raise awareness and contribute toward ensuring the promotion, respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of people of African descent, as well as their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

Thirteen years after Durban, it is imperative that effective actions at the national and regional levels contribute toward tangible improvements in the lives of millions of people of African descent around the world.

On the matter of justice, people of African descent are too often the victims of crime and violence, while facing discrimination in their attempts to seek legal redress. In many societies the problem is endemic. Access to justice must be based on equality and the effective implementation of national and international legal frameworks.

Activities undertaken through the Decade, including the provision of legal assistance to people of African descent who are victims of racism or discrimination will support the promotion and protection of the values of justice and equity.

On development, the international community has come to recognise the correlation between discrimination and poverty. Structural and institutional racism inherent in many societies has determined the level of social, economic and political advancement for many people of African

descent. Despite the abundant and irrefutable evidence of the contributions of people of African descent to the development of our societies, too often they are marginalised and face stereotypes and stigma.

During the Decade, States are encouraged to take specific steps to alleviate and remedy disparities, while enabling people of African descent to overcome persistent, structural forms of discrimination. Such measures would include revisiting policies and practices that have a negative impact on individuals and communities largely comprised of people of African descent.

The African Union attaches great importance to the issue of the African people in the diaspora. The AU has recognised African Diaspora as a component of the African continent and also encouraged all those of African descent to contribute to Africa's development. In this context, the AU held its first ever Global African Diaspora Summit in 2012 in South Africa as a bid to engage the African diaspora".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the General Assembly launches this International Decade, we are reaffirming the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This Decade is an opportunity to unite our voices and renew our political commitment to universal human rights and give new momentum to eliminating all forms of racism and racial discrimination against anyone, anywhere.

I thank you for your kind attention.

10 December 2014

Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent

Feature Address delivered by Prof. Sir Hilary Beckles – The University of the West Indies

**H.E., Mr. Sam Kutesa, distinguished President of this United Nations General Assembly,
Excellences of the United Nations,
Colleagues of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent,
Distinguished members of the General Assembly,
Colleagues of Civil Society,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

What a beautiful moment we are invited to share by the distinguished President of this assembly this afternoon in this respected Chamber of the United Nations!

What a seminal season it is for women and men of serious disposition to step up and move forward to shape humanity's future in a fashion consistent with its finest values!

Critically, we are assembled here, in this world forum, to choose; we are at the crossroads, and we seek the guidance of Legba, African God of the Intersection, to provide the spiritual content of our choice. The importance of this understanding should not be understated in any way.

We are at the dawn of this 21st century, and once again humanity struggles to come to terms with the legacies of the crimes committed against its African family. Aspects of these legacies are as alive today as they were two centuries ago.

Everywhere that African enchainment and enslavement became the basis of societies and economies, their descendants today cannot assume the human right to breathe the air of freedom and justice.

Plantation slave drivers and overseers have been replaced by public prosecutors and militarized police, and the human right to life, denied Africans during the 400 years of the barbarity called chattel slavery, continues to be contested. The racism that informs that contestation defines and distorts the primary social relations of humanity.

In 1781, the English Law Lord, Judge Mansfield, in an effort to purge African enslavement from his homeland, and to confine its vulgarity to the colonies, insisted that his country folks at home should breathe neither the foul air of slavery nor endure the stench of its stain.

Today, 233 years later, millions of African descendants are still breathing the foul air that blows from the stench of slavery. In their quest to inhale the free air of justice and democracy they are seized by the throat and their breath taken away in a fashion reminiscent of centuries ago.

“I can’t breathe” has now become the universal ideology of the African diaspora, most vocal in the USA where African descendants are brutally policed in their pursuit of social justice, economic enfranchisement, and existential dignity.

No longer do we have to watch the construction in movies of the destruction of black life, nor journey to the journals of history to see and read of this deadly mentality, bred in slavery, legally at work, officially sanctioned, and in triumphant celebration. We see it every day in our streets as they go about our daily business.

Humanity cries for the victims of these crimes; we cry out for humanity’s descent, deeper and deeper into the despair of the dungeon that is the legacy of African enslavement – the greatest crime against it, in and before modernity.

There has been a steadfast refusal by the beneficiaries of these crimes to formally recognize their nature and nurture. It is this refusal of recognition that drives the legacies of these crimes into our social realities and facilitates life taking policing in our communities.

This denial stands undiminished in the face of a mountain of evidence that cries out for ownership, responsibility and accountability.

Denial and silence are now the mother and father of a new generation of hate crimes, squeezing black life from already impaired lungs. They are today’s breath takers, as hate and greed were in earlier times.

But the names on the cold, stone-like face of silence and denial must be known and called to account.

Portugal continues to deny its slavery crimes, yet we know that this nation was the largest shippers of enchained African bodies across the Atlantic. To Portugal we say “Rise to your Responsibility”.

Great Britain denies, yet we know that it was the greatest profit maximizers and extractor investor in African slavery. To Great Britain we say “Rise to your Responsibility”.

France denies, yet we know that it fought the bloodiest war of all to prevent enslaved blacks from breathing the air of liberty, fraternity. Haiti emerged the leading global symbol of black freedom, resilient and respected, but covered in the ash of French retribution. To France we say “Rise to your Responsibility”.

The Dutch denies, yet we know that they were first to develop the trade in enchained African bodies as a modern, global, corporate enterprise. To the Dutch we say, “Rise to your Responsibility”.

Spain denies, yet we know that the Spanish were first conceptualized and practiced the idea that African enslavement should follow the genocide they imposed upon the natives of these Americas.

Norway and Denmark, not to be left behind, joined in and prospered, as did the Royals of Russia and the Aristocracy of Austria who were as financially enriched as the beyond the scenes slave investing Swiss and Swedes.

All of Western Europe combined with their ‘American’ colonies created the cradle of western financial modernization based upon the most lucrative sustainable investment of all times – the enchained, enslaved African body as commercial property.

This silence of the enslaving nations, and their political allies, must be broken and their denials ended. Then, and only then, will African descendants breathe freely the air of life and justice.

Mr. President, I wish on behalf of the forward looking world to express gratitude to this noble and life empowering institution – the UN General Assembly – for its wisdom in finding a way to declare this decade in recognition of African descendant people. Mr. President, and Assembly members, we thank you.

We thank also all those advocates and champions of this cause; those who constitute the Working Group of Experts on African Descendant Peoples, our diplomats especially, for bringing us to this moment. Ms. Fanon, Prof. Shepherd, and Ambassador Rhonda King are entitled to our recognition.

We thank also our colleagues at UNESCO who have worked without rest to ensure that the Slave Routes Project, and the General History of Africa Projects, stayed alive despite life threatening budget cuts.

These are the two programs that have made an enormous impact and difference. I celebrate the effort of Madam Irina Bokova, UNESCO’s Leader, and urge that she continues to find creative ways to ensure that they remain as UNESCO’s flagship projects during the decade.

UNESCO has determined that the 9th Volume of the General History of Africa, to be published in three monographs, be dedicated to the study of African descendants, and that it should carry the title “Global Africa”.

Going forward, the African descendant people of Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific, and Latin America especially will have a voice and a venue to express their vision.

This decade will provide millions of African descendants, hitherto silenced and buried in denial, with opportunities to rise without shame and guilt to claim their African heritage without fear of reprisals.

To offer these hitherto ‘invisibles’ an opportunity of engagement and participation must be a major goal of this decade.

In this regard I wish to invite you to celebrate the government of Brazil for its enlightened policy that African History must be taught at all levels of the Education system – Primary to Tertiary. This policy should be emulated by all countries that have built their economies and societies upon African labor and intellect.

The Transglobal slave trade was more than a criminal movement of enchained African bodies. It was a transfer of African cosmologies and epistemologies to slaving societies that were enriched by African minds and hands.

The violent recruitment of enchained bodies also enabled the mobilization of intellectual and cultural resources that gave rise to the ‘West’ as a recipient of Africa’s best.

In this decade resources must be provided UNESCO, NGO’s, Universities, and museums to research and discuss these traditions of labor and intellectual exploitation, and to illustrate the true role of the African in the making of modernity.

Finally, there is the imperative of reparatory justice.

Dr. Martin Luther King in his iconic “I have a dream speech” – said the following:

“We have come to our nation’s capitol to cash a check America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds’.

Mr President, we have been taught to rehearse and recant the ‘dream’ part of this powerful message to modernity, and to forget or ignore the ‘reparatory justice’ plea.

Today, I call upon the world to take notice that Dr. King’s reparatory justice claim is as alive as the power of his dream.

This 21st Century will be the century in which the world will be called upon to atone with reparatory justice for the crimes against Africans and their descendants. These legacies continue to cripple, and squeeze the air from their lungs!

It took all of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries to establish and globalize these crimes of enchainment and enslavement.

It took all of the 19th century, from Toussaint’s Haiti in the 1790s to Lincoln’s USA in the 1860, to Brazil and Cuba in the 1880s, to uproot chattel slavery from the modern world.

It then took all of the 20th century for African descendants to convert their legal freedom into citizenship and institutional leadership – gains continually threatened by forces rooted in slavery’s enduring legacies.

Now, if it will take all of the 21st century to achieve reparatory justice, we shall not retreat but will mobilize this decade and begin again to move speedily along the journey to reparatory justice.

Our finest and treasured values – peace, justice, respect, and reconciliation require that we attain reparatory justice. It will be the basis, the only sustainable foundation upon which 21st century humanity will rebuild this world with peace and prosperity for all.

The CARICOM Nations, ancestral homes to the world's first complete slave-based economies, have established National and Regional Commissions in order to engage the nations of Europe, the owners and operators of these slave economies, in a diplomatic dialogue designed to rebuild trust and respect within the framework of reparatory justice. CARICOM has endorsed the Ten Point Action Plan for Reparatory Justice submitted by its Commission.

It calls for reparatory justice around issues such as healthcare, education, cultural development, food security, and critically a formal apology as well as debt cancellation. It's a plan which says that the legacies of slavery, and the enduring elements of colonialism, constitute the greatest single drag upon the development efforts of citizens.

It calls upon the nations of Europe to return to the scene of these crimes and to participate in remedial development work that will enable African descendants to free themselves of the cultural and economic shackles that remained in place after the formalities of Emancipation. This is the only path that can lead to an end of the shame and guilt that result from the silence and denial.

We urge all countries to establish National Reparations Commissions. We intend that this decade will see these National Commissions coming together as a Global Commission for Reparatory Justice.

A war of terror is being waged against reparation advocates. They continue to experience the terrorism of intimidation. Black nations and civil society advocate alike are threatened when supportive of reparatory justice.

U.N agencies are denied funding for supporting projects that are reparatory of these legacies. The double speak of open mouth lip support and budget butchery is the strategy of subversion. The financial power of rich countries, built upon slavery, is used to intimidate and punish black nations into silence.

This strategy, this attitude of anger, is not sustainable in this 21st century. Many black nations cannot breathe as a result, but they must find strength to say "No More" – and to say it in here, in this the United Nations.

In the name of Toussaint, Mandela, Harriett Tubman,

Malcolm and Dr. King, and Maya Angelou, let us all say in this decade: "The demand for Reparatory Justice will be taken through every diplomatic door, or taken down the corridors of every court."

We are survivors of the African Holocaust. Into these Americas were dragged in chains some 12 million enslaved ancestors. At the end of the barbarity only 6 million had survived. Survivors have a right to Reparatory Justice. The powerful have no right to deprive them.

Let us all, then, raise our hands [speaker raises his hands] in opposition to the violence that denies us the right to breathe, and to have justice.

Let us all resolve to make decent this decade as the door to a century that must witness the triumph of our collective and shared conception of humanity at its best.

Let us all resolve furthermore to clean up the mess left by slavery and colonization – and move on as one humanity in peace and with Love.

Mr. President, be assured of my respect, cooperation, and my gratitude. Your generosity this day is acknowledged, and I thank you for your gracious endurance of my intervention in your General Assembly.

I thank you.

10 December 2014

Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent

Statement by Dr. Barry A. Biekman (Civil Society Speaker)

**Mr. President, Excellencies,
Honoured Guests,
Representatives of the African Families and Civil Society,**

I bring you greetings from the members of Tiye International, The African European Women ' s ' Movement "Sophiedela", the Platform of the Dutch Slavery Past, the Global Coalition for the International Decade for People of African descent¹ and the world wide Civil Society grassroots African families on this historical moment of the launching of the International Decade for People of African descent.

Mr. President,

We support the International Decade for People of African descent and it's Mandate to follow the recommendations pertaining to the DDPA from the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR), as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

It must be reminded here that the decision to have the International Decade did not come as a gift from heaven. It came only because of a long struggle by Pan Africanist supported by those civil society organizations who were committed to the implementation of the DDPA and finally because of the hard working involvement of the Working Group of Experts on People of African descent, a special thanks goes to dr. Mireille Fanon and Professor dr. Verene Shepherd and not to forget the support of the African Group and the great majority of member states of the United Nations. A special thanks therefore goes to the African countries for their role in defending the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to the African Union to declare African Diaspora worldwide family as their 6th region.

The launching of the Decade today is a great victory for the cause of justice with the strong reaffirmation of and call for the full and effective implementation of the DDPA. We hope that the implementation of the Decade should put a final end to the opposition against, undermining of and false promotion regarding the Durban follow-up process which we have regularly witnessed since the successful World Conference Against Racism in 2001.

1 The Global Coalition for the International Decade for People of African Descent is established to provide global peoples activism and support for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent as proclaimed by the United Nations for the period 2015-2024 based on the principles of Recognition, Justice and Development.

At the center of the demands during the World Conference Against Racism, by African people and in diaspora under the leadership of the 12th December Reparation Movement and many other Pan African Reparation Coalitions, was the declaration of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism and apartheid as crimes against humanity. In fact it was the longest and most depraved crime against humanity ever.. which lasted for more than three centuries as had been declared by the United Nations including the republic Suriname by its Permanent Delegation, ambassador Udenhout in 2001. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism and apartheid destroyed the development of Africa and enriched Europe and the European colonists in the Americas. It established the system of racism & racial discrimination, to be specific Afrophobia, that effects and has its impact what the African people and in diaspora experience until today.

Mr. President,

Really, we have reasons to be glad with the establishment of the Decade. But we have reasons to be disappointed too. Because despite of the adoption of the Programme of Activities by the General Assembly last month, powerful State actors, including those who boycotted the 2009 Durban Review Conference and the 2011 commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the DDPA,. continue their efforts to render the DDPA impotent.

We deplore the 9 votes cast against and 42 abstentions cast, but salute the 121 votes in favor of the resolution on actions against racism and comprehensive implementation of the DDPA, which the third committee of the General Assembly approved on November 26nd. At the same time we are bewildered that abstaining countries succeeded to delete a paragraph from the G77 draft resolution, which had the support of the majority of countries and which stated: "Commends the constructive role played by non-governmental organizations in participating in the Durban follow-up mechanisms and the Human Rights Council, which has greatly contributed to the development of the Programme of Activities and the preparation for the International Decade."

Mr. President,

Truth has the inherent power to produce the promised effects.

The full and irrevocable recognition by all countries that the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism and apartheid was a crime against humanity is necessary for the credibility of the Decade. Without that we have reason to doubt the sincerity of states to restore the rights of people of African descent during the Decade. It is why I on behalf of the African descent

worldwide families challenge all national state parliaments and governments to officially recognize and declare the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity as some countries have

already done. We call on all the countries who organized, participated in and profited from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the hard slave labour by the kidnapped African ancestors to present their sincere apologies as the first step and I challenge all governments and parliaments concerned, to act on this urgent matter.

We strongly welcome the efforts by Caribbean governments & states to place the issue of Reparations on the International Agenda. For the African descendants families the adopted theme of the Decade, “Recognition, Justice, Development”, is for us synonymous with the Repairing of the damage, which must become the overall concept of the Decade. Reparations is not limited to material repair, but something more fundamental relating to restoring every aspect of the rights of people of African descent.

Mr. President,

We therefore invite all Member States, as proposed by the Global Coalition for the International Decade for People of African Descent, to recognize and honour the Decade as the “Reparation Decade”.

We believe that the right of People of African descent to learn about their rights as enshrined in the DDPA and other Human Rights instruments must be assured during the Decade. The Decade must become a framework to address the concentration of misery and disadvantages which people of African descent face everywhere they live: poverty, racial discrimination and lack of access to human rights & their institutions, high rates of unemployment and imprisonment, vulnerability to violence and lack of access to justice, lack of access to good education, healthcare, housing, multiple forms of discrimination, and political and economic marginalization and stigmatization.

As educators and scholars across the racial divide agree that (a) the primary purpose of education is to uplift and enhance the lives of all individuals (b) it must be the right type of education that engenders positive identity, self-esteem, self-confidence including love, respect and appreciation for one’s history and culture. We therefore call for adapting both formal and informal education for students of African descent and others so that that it no longer marginalizes and relegates Africa and Africans to periphery of anything important, but for most that our next African generations can say: “I’m not afraid, because of the color of my skin, to be an African...., I’m proud to be an African.....”.

Mr. President,

We have seen the situation faced by people of African descent around the world grow more and more precarious.. and we seek urgent and concrete results from the International Decade. African Diaspora Civil Society grassroots organizations cannot afford to leave any members of the African Diaspora and African Civil Society around the world behind. Every forum, every workshop, every review and assessment, every planning session and every on-the-ground implementation project must closely involve representatives from Civil Society and the grassroots communities. And we cannot stress enough the importance of always including women, girls and young male adults, the future generation,

on an equal basis. To leave them behind would be as to leave our hearts and souls, our very selves, behind as well.

When an African American man is strangled to death by the police on the streets of New York we the people of African descent feel the same that we cannot breathe. We add our voices in solidarity with all those demonstrating to demand justice for the victims of racially based police brutality. This situation makes it clear that institutionalized racism is still alive and that the campaigns against all forms of multiple racism & racial profiling as well the symbolic & psychological violence situation in different countries must be intensified. Whether the ‘ Black Pete figure ‘ in the yearly Dutch Santa Claus culture historical tradition is just a problem in the Netherlands because of the revival of stereotype of African (black) people or interlinked to similar historical cultural tradition, stereotypical language like some people continue to call us ‘nigger’ & racist situations in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world.

Mr. President,

On behalf of the world wide African diaspora families I invite all of you to join hands with us for the implementation of the Programme of Activities in the spirit of “Recognition, Justice and Development.” Because this Decade requires the committed support and involvement of all: international, regional, national, sectors of society, stakeholders and people of good will in the world.

I invite you all to make this “Reparation Decade” a great success.

I thank you Mr. President.