

29 March 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery  
and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson, Distinguished Ministers, Dr. Sheila Walker, Executive Director of Afro diaspora Incorporated, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

Today's event provides us an opportunity to honour the millions of women, men and children who were victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

It is a day to remember one of the darkest chapters in our past and to recommit ourselves to doing our part to prevent a repeat of this abhorrent historical fact.

As we reflect on the past, we should continue to pay homage to the sacrifices of the enslaved Africans and their descendants, and recognize their respective contributions to our world and societies.

Excellencies, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade focuses the world's attention on the unprecedented horror of the slave trade, providing us all with an opportunity to collectively and solemnly reflect on the seemingly limitless scope of man's inhumanity to man.

While we reflect on the past horrors, we must also confront current and modern challenges posed by the many forms and manifestations of slavery.

All too many innocent people including women and children are suffering due to the indignity resulting from human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Furthermore, many children continue to be exploited as child laborers instead of being in school.

The challenges of modern slavery and discrimination that confronts us today include institutional racism, gender discrimination, social and economic inequality, hatred, and prejudice.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme of this year's remembrance is "Remember Slavery: Celebrating the Heritage and Culture of the African Diaspora and its Roots".

This is a timely theme as it draws attention to the vibrant African culture and traditions that have enriched life in countries once involved in the slave trade and how the African Diaspora continues to enhance many aspects of daily life in countries around the world.

Excellencies, in 2007, the General Assembly adopted a resolution to create a permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and to acknowledge the tragedy and enduring consequences of the enslavement of African peoples.

I wish to congratulate and thank the Permanent Memorial Committee led by the Permanent Representative of Jamaica Courtney Rattray for tireless efforts that led to the successful construction and unveiling last year, of that Permanent Memorial.

This memorial – "The Ark of Return" – occupies a prominent place here at the United Nations and is crucial in educating and informing current and future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

I also commend and recognize the invaluable contribution of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and African Group Member States for their sustained commitment to this annual remembrance.

I call upon all Member States and people everywhere to do their part to fight for a world free of all forms and manifestations of modern slavery including discrimination, oppression and racism.

Thank you for your attention.