



**President of the General Assembly
Gayap Dialogue on “Reparatory Justice”**

**26 March 2024
Summary**

The President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, convened a ***Gayap Dialogue*** on “*Reparatory Justice*”, a day after the commemoration of the **International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade meeting on 25 March 2024**.

Whereas a question was raised at the outset on the legality of reparations liability on modern independent states that did not exist at the time of slavery, overall, the participants echoed a common sentiment that discussions on reparatory justice are both necessary and timely. It was observed that the legacies of slavery and colonialism – and the link to racism and discrimination – continue to negatively impact the daily lives of people of African descent across the globe through systemic racism, poverty, and widespread inequality.

Some participants pointed out that the debate on the issue is indeed emotional; but that the discomfort cannot be the reason for defensiveness or to avoid any action at all – given that slavery was no different from other equally sensitive issues being dealt with on the global agenda. It was also acknowledged that the roots of this issue were so deep to resolve overnight; and it was observed that finding a way forward on reparations should be viewed as a process.

Some participants suggested the creation of an appropriate space or platforms within the United Nations to encourage an open and honest dialogue on this difficult topic. One participant indicated that this conversation be elevated beyond the ***Gayap Dialogue***; and for PGA78 to ensure that future PGAs sustain momentum on the issue.

The role of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent was also mentioned in this regard with participants noting the need for a separate forum to advance dialogue among Member States. The need to establish a framework within the UN was underlined, with one participant mentioning that a General Assembly resolution could establish a pathway to this end. It was further highlighted that, in addition to the UN, these discussions need to take place at the national level with the participation of all stakeholders.

Participants noted that States that have benefited from enslavement should take full accountability and should devise national mechanisms to address the ongoing legacies of slavery, such as structural inequalities. Some highlighted recent developments in this area, such as official apologies issued from the highest levels of government and the integration of this topic in school

curricula. At the same time, it was noted that apologies are only the ‘first step’ and that no State has comprehensively addressed the legacies of slavery, racism, discrimination and colonialism.

Participants also underlined the need for further dialogue on the scope of reparatory justice, which goes beyond financial compensation and should encompass reparations related to the tremendous loss of identity, language, and overall heritage. Participants commended UNESCO’s work in preserving cultural heritage and promoting education on the history and legacies of slavery.

One participant highlighted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; and the potential proclamation of a second International Decade of People of African Descent as important tools to raise awareness and facilitate dialogue on this issue.

It was further highlighted that reparations should include measures to eliminate racism and to promote diversity, which is particularly important in the context of rising populism in many countries. One participant added that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is not possible without reparations.

Finally, the upcoming first **Global Conference for UN Anti-Racism Advocates** and the **9th United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum**, scheduled to be held later this year in October and November, respectively, were highlighted as important opportunities to advance dialogue on these critical issues.

In conclusion, it was reiterated to continue honest and open dialogue, at both national and international levels, as this is key to addressing the legacies of one of the darkest chapters in human history.
