



CONCEPT NOTE

African Union Continental Symposium on the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent

18-20 September 2018
Accra/Cape Coast, Ghana

Host Organization	African Union Commission
Coordinating Unit	Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) of the African Union Commission

Prepared By:
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Background:

The African Diaspora is an integral constituency of the African Union and their participation in the Union is a fundamental institutional imperative. Article 3(q) of The Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2003) expressly invites the African Diaspora to participate as an important part to the building of the Union. Furthermore, the Declaration of the Global Diaspora Summit (2012) recognized the need to build sustainable partnerships between the African continent and the African diaspora through sustainable dialogue and effective collaboration with the governments and peoples of different regions of the world where the diaspora are located.

The African Union Designation of the African Diaspora as the 6th Region of Africa

The African Union Commission through its Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) has instituted a program of Regional Consultative Conferences (RCCs) as a vehicle to enable the African Union to consult with the various Diaspora stakeholders around the world to give practical meaning to the designation of the African Diaspora as the 6th Region of the continent.

Through this mechanism, CIDO has established and/or supported a growing number of AU-affiliated diaspora networks around the world, including in the Caribbean, Canada, Australia and Europe.

The International Decade for People of African Descent

The UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (resolution 68/237) citing the need to strengthen national, regional and international 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.

As proclaimed by the General Assembly, the theme for the International Decade is “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development.”

The main objectives of the International Decade are as follows:

- 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.
- Promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies.
- Adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks according to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

The Decade, therefore, provides a framework for all relevant actors, including the United Nations and the African Union, to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the associated program of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban Declaration and Plan of Action)

The International Decade for People of African Descent is itself situated within the context of, and provides practical follow-up to, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from August 31 to September 8, 2001.

The Durban Declaration and Plan of Action acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and further acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade and slavery are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Most importantly, the Durban Declaration acknowledged peoples of African descent were victims of slavery and the slave trade, colonization and apartheid, and continue to be victims of their consequences in the present day; and requested the United Nations to, inter alia, consider establishing a working group or other mechanism of the United Nations to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the African Diaspora and make proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent.

Objectives and Outcomes of the Symposium:

The African Union Continental Symposium on the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent will consolidate multiple goals set forth in the above-mentioned international and continental frameworks relating to people of African descent on the continent of Africa and the in the African Diaspora. It is designed to provide practical implementation of goals and objectives relating to justice, recognition, anti-racism, and development.

The Citizens and Diaspora Directorate of the African Union Commission, in its capacity as the technical unit responsible for diaspora engagement, will lead an international team of experts and policy makers to develop a road map for the national, continental action towards the achievement of the objectives of the Decade.

The symposium will have the following outcomes:

- Enhanced awareness among AU member states, Regional Economic Communities (RECS) and the general African public of the IDPAD and its Program of Action.

- Improved coordination and synergy between national, regional, and continental stakeholders on the implementation of actions and targets set forth within the Program of Action of the Decade.
- Enhanced participation of African Diaspora actors with the African Union and its member states and regional communities within the context of the IDPAD.

Structure and Format:

The symposium will take place over a 3-day period in Accra and Cape Coast, Ghana. The two-day technical program in Accra will combine a multi-dimensional methodology including individual and panel presentations, small group technical working groups and a cultural exhibition.

The symposium will conclude on the 3rd day with a special heritage tour of the Cape Coast Castle, one of the most prominent legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Africa and the site of the forced expatriation of millions of slaves from the West African region.

The choice of Ghana as the host country has been informed by the country's historical position within of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its prominence in the colonial and post-independence era as a continental leader in the liberation and empowerment of African peoples – both on the continent and in the diaspora.

Participation

The symposium will constitute the first major event from an African Union institutional context to commemorate the IDPAD and elaborate a continental platform for the achievement of the Decades' Program of Action with respect to the three main pillars of justice, recognition and development.

Accordingly, the symposium will bring together participants from all relevant stakeholder groups, including the African Union Commission, member states of the Union, the Economic Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC), Regional Economic Communities, African civil society groups, African diaspora representatives, and international partners.

The African Union delegation will be led by a member of the senior leadership of the AU Commission and will be serviced by the Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora (CIDO).

Date and Venue of the Symposium

The African Union Continental Symposium on the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent will take place from **18-20 September 2018** in Accra and Cape Coast, Ghana.

Additional Information

Learn more by contacting the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate of the AU Commission through cido@africa-union.org or by social media twitter.com/AUC_CIDO