



Joint United Nations Ghana Statement on International Day for People of African Descent – 2022

Accra, 31 August 2022 – Today marks the International Day for People of African Descent, celebrated for the first time on 31 August 2021. “Through this Observance the United Nations aims to promote the extraordinary contributions of the African diaspora around the world and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against people of African descent.”

As we celebrate the diverse heritage and culture of people of African descent and their enormous contribution to our societies throughout history, the UN Secretary-General, in his message to mark the Day, notes that “millions of people of African descent [around the world] are still subject to racism and deeply entrenched and systemic racial discrimination.” This must stop. The UN Secretary-General therefore calls for the full respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African Descent. Such violation of the rights of people of African descent must be redressed and formal apologies and reparations for the egregious wrongs of slavery and colonialism must be demanded.

In December, the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent, whose establishment is an important achievement of the International Decade for People of African Descent, will hold its first session. The United Nations Secretary-General urges all stakeholders, including people, communities and organizations of African descent, to participate and drive the work of the Forum forward.

The United Nations General Assembly has requested the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to draft a United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. The Forum will contribute to this critically important work.

“It is essential that we continue to speak up – loudly and without fail – against any notion of racial superiority and that we work tirelessly to free all societies from the blight of racism.” Notes the UN Secretary-General.

In April this year, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Under-Secretary-General, Dr. Natalia Kanem, accompanied by H.E. Epsy Campbell Barr, Vice President of Costa Rica visited Ghana and participated in a high-level forum to advance the equity for people of African descent. Their visit, named the “Return Mission”, allowed the high-level officials to explore various heritage sites of relevance to the cause of advancing the rights of people of African Descent, and signaled the undivided commitment towards building a stronger future for Africa and the diaspora based on a common heritage and values. They called on all to accelerate the recognition, justice, and development of people of African Descent. On 24 January 2022, UNESCO and UNFPA together with Government partners and other key stakeholders such as African Network of Cultural Promoters and

Entrepreneurs, Ghana Culture Forum, and PANAFEST hosted the global edition of the World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture celebrating the many vibrant cultures of the African continent and African Diasporas around the world and promoting them as an effective force for dialogue including racism, sustainable development and peace. Additionally, UNESCO "Routes of Enslaved Peoples: Resistance, Liberty and Heritage" Project has been contributing to the production of innovative knowledge, the development of high-level scientific networks and the support of memory initiatives on the theme of slavery, its abolition, the resistance it generated and highlighted the issue of racism inherent and ways to deal with it.

The UN Ghana commends the Government of Ghana for the Beyond the Return initiative, a 10-year project under the theme, "A Decade of African Renaissance -2020-2030" and will be built on 7 pillars to provide a platform for engagements among the people of African descent, wherever they may currently be living. "Beyond the Return" is a follow-up to the successful "Year of Return", launched in commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of the first recorded enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619.

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