



**Statement delivered by the Hon. Oneidge Walrond, M.P.
Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce of Guyana
at the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on People of
African Descent
New York, USA
May 30, 2023**

Mr./Madam Chair

Excellencies

The Government of Guyana commends the work of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to these deliberations.

My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Minister of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Guyana is committed to upholding the dignity of people of African descent through strong mechanisms for the protection of human rights in our state's legal framework.

We are similarly committed to the development of Afro-Guyanese by ensuring equitable access to the social and economic programmes of the government such as free education, free healthcare, access to housing and potable water to which we collectively dedicate more than one third of our national budget.

We have enshrined in our Constitution, the right to protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, gender, and religion amongst other characteristics.

These rights are justiciable before an independent judiciary in which Guyanese of African Descent have historically been proportionally represented. At the apex of this judiciary is an independent supranational tribunal – the Caribbean Court of Justice.

Our institutional framework also features an Ethnic Relations Commission – a constitutional body, independent of the executive – to which claims of racial discrimination may be made. This Commission is empowered to investigate such claims, to make findings, and to recommend appropriate penalties.

A Racial Hostility Act criminalizes conduct which excites hostility against persons on the basis of race, and elected officials can be barred from holding office if found guilty of exciting racial hostility.

Guyana continues to strongly support initiatives for reparations for the historical atrocities associated with slavery and the slave trade and is part of the CARICOM Reparations Commission. Guyana also established a National Reparations **Committee** comprising and led by Afro-Guyanese leaders that receives annual subventions from the government.

Excellencies

Guyana is a multi-ethnic society striving to forge unity and harmony amongst our diverse peoples, and are committed to the development of our citizens of African descent. We will continue to support the work of this Forum, including the elaboration of a Political Declaration on People of African Descent.

I thank you.

(Full statement)