

Statement by Saint Kitts and Nevis
at the
2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
UN General Assembly Hall, May 30, 2023

Excellencies, President,

Saint Kitts and Nevis is pleased to participate in this, the 2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. We are committed to “Realising the dream” through a “United Nations Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African Descent”, a declaration that is long overdue.

What is this dream? it is the dream that out of the tragedy and barbarity of slavery and colonialism - with its deportation of populations, its transfer of people from one continent to another, its distant memories of old beliefs, and its fragments of murdered cultures - can arise new, holistic systems dedicated to healing, mutual understanding, reconciliation, peace and restitution.

For us in the Caribbean, it is the dream that our beautiful archipelago that was once a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent, can become the bridge of love and goodwill that reassembles, restores and re-unites the broken fragments of a scattered race. This declaration also has the potential to give rise to new partnerships and narratives around trade and investment, scientific partnerships, education and mobility, people-to-people exchanges among the peoples of African Descent in Africa and throughout her Diaspora. It also requires that we revisit colonial approaches to how we educate our people and how our qualified and trained experts are received internationally by organizations like the UN.

It is our fervent hope that the Sessions of the Permanent Forum will lay the foundation for us to elaborate this Declaration and to ensure that the human rights of people of African Descent remain paramount to our pursuit of human rights, social justice and sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

Can there be a grander standard of human rights for a world that is aspiring to a better civilization than the imperative that the eight billion people of this planet be ***free from fear***?

Fear is both the spiky fence of cruelty built by systemic and structural racism as well as the grey wall of indifference that separates “us” from “them”. *Fear* is what informs racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance which blind us from seeing the humanity in others. It is *fear* that maintains the gap between the law and reality, between the conscience of humanity and the world as it is.

Freedom from fear, therefore, sums up the whole philosophy of human rights which are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action.

Chair,

The abolition of systemic racism requires a systemic response, and St. Kitts and Nevis is proud to align itself with the CARICOM statement and to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the Caribbean Community in making the call for Reparatory Justice and increasing our advocacy within the United Nations system to identify pragmatic steps towards its achievement.

Reparatory justice for injury, loss and damage caused by centuries of chattel slavery, native genocide and deceptive indentureship, is the defining cause of our time to which we must ***dare to be worthy***, especially as the International Decade for Persons of African Descent winds down.

St. Kitts and Nevis stands solidly behind CARICOM's 10-Point Action Plan that demands that the descendants of those perpetrators who benefited from slavery and the diabolical trans-Atlantic trade in Africans must return to the scene of the crime, for there is a case to be answered. It also demands that the ***humanity*** of the persons of African descent who continue to experience the deleterious effects of that sordid system must also be acknowledged and affirmed, first by way of apology and then through the implementation of a radical social, political, health, education and economic justice programme.

Chair,

The challenge to ***dare something worthy*** is precisely the rationale upon which the United Nations was built. There can be no progress without struggle, however, a commitment to the values and principles of the United Nations ensures that we apply compassion to establish justice rather than resorting to confrontation.

The struggle against racism and oppression, the struggle for reparatory justice, requires that we all get *loose* with compassion. It calls for us to be brave and profound.

As the 2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent opens, I challenge all of us to ***dare something worthy - Aude aliquid dignum***.

May we move forward with courage and conviction.

I thank you.