



AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND DIASPORA NETWORK

President & Chief Executive Officer

New York, 29 May 2023

Second Session of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent

Item 5: Thematic Discussion:

Pan-Africanism for Dignity, Justice and Peace: Africa, Agenda 2063 and People of African Descent:

Statement by Dr. Djibril Diallo, President and CEO of the African Renaissance And Diaspora Network (ARDN) Inc. New York

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Introduction: I would like to thank her Excellency Epsy Campbell-Barr, President of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent for the invitation to this important Second Session to the Forum. The work of the African Renaissance And Diaspora Network is dedicated to strengthening the ties between Africa and People of African Descent, in other words ours is an effort to breathe life into the concept of the Diaspora being the Sixth Region of Africa. The statement below is therefore to be viewed within the context of Africa and People of Africa Descent.

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1. Both the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 strive towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

2. The problem with both Agenda 2030 and the AU Agenda 2063 has been that they present a scale of roadmaps which are so large and high flown that they tend to be disconnected from the everyday lives they seek to improve.

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THE PATHWAY TO SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE

3. To address the need to bring both agendas closer to the people they are supposed to serve, The African Renaissance And Diaspora Network (ARDN) launched the Pathway to Solutions Initiative, in 2017 as an international, multilateral special project for the United Nations, to popularize the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations (the “SDGs”), in Africa and the African diaspora, in tandem with Africa Agenda 2063.

4. The Pathway to Solutions Initiative, which resulted from profound consultations amongst stakeholders from the United Nations system, governments, civil society, academia and the private sector, was presented by ARDN to the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed on 19 December 2017, in a ceremony at the United Nations in New York, in the presence of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, the then Acting Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Africa, the Director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and a Member of Parliament of the Republic of Ghana.

THE CAMPAIGN TO GIVE A RED CARD TO ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

5. As reflected in the Concept Note for this Second Session, the 2030 agenda emphasizes that Sustainable Development requires a transformation of our world towards greater equity, within and among countries—a world in which no one is left behind and all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality.

6. The Pathway to Solutions Initiative seeks to integrate the SDGs, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls) into the common language of society, and educate and motivate people and groups across all sectors to contribute to achieving these important goals.

7. In the game of football, a red card is shown to any player who has committed a serious infraction of the rules, and permanently dismisses the player from the field. The Red Card Campaign envisions any form of gender-based discrimination and violence as a serious infraction of the rules of society, deserving of a red card.

8. The Red Card Campaign was initiated by ARDN at the margins of the 2019 Women’s World Cup in France, in collaboration with the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the

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Fédération Internationale de Football Association and the Conseil Présidentiel pour l'Afrique of the French Republic.

Since its initiation in 2019, the Red Card campaign has enjoyed the support and collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders, including, *inter alia*, governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, commerce, and leaders from sport, arts and culture, government and commerce.

10. One of the greatest challenges to gender equality are the many ways that violence and discrimination against women and girls occur. Gender based violence takes many forms, including employment discrimination, wage disparity, human trafficking, domestic violence, forced labour, sexual exploitation, unequal laws, sexual harassment and abuse, and physical assault. Women across the world continue to face societal, institutional and other barriers that prevent them from making real decisions in personal and fundamental aspects of their lives. The often covert and secretive nature of violence and discrimination tends to obscure just how pervasive the issue is. Women and girls of African descent are also often doubly burdened, and are subject to discrimination on the basis of their race or ancestry, in addition to their gender.

11. In this light, the overall objectives of the Red Card Campaign are two-fold: first, to put an end to all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence; and second, to ensure that women are uplifted and empowered, and can enjoy, on a basis no less favorable than men, the tools, resources, environment and knowledge to thrive.

Red Card Campaign Activations

12. In 2021 and 2022 ARDN accelerated the rollout of the Red Card Campaign at the global, regional and national levels, through the creation and provision of fora and other enabling environments to support building public awareness of the challenges faced by women and girls and to support the discussion and development of strategies to address these challenges. It is hoped that these activations will serve to create partnerships and coalitions, help to frame policy, and build and strengthen commitments, at all levels, to drive positive change.

Such activations have included the Africa Open for Business Summit at the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York

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and which is focused on business and commerce; the Women of the Diaspora Summit series , which is focused on the special circumstances of women and girls in the Diaspora; and the Pan African Youth Leadership Summit, which is focused on the mobilization of young people. Strategic activations are also implemented around appropriate international and regional events and fora. They also include the Red Card Pledge, which seeks to build a movement whereby people all over the world commit to taking a stand against gender-based discrimination and violence.

At the national level, Red Card Campaign activations are carefully tailored to concerns of the specific countries wherein they are implemented. National activations typically take the form of an action plan, initially one-year in duration, that is developed hand in hand with the government, United Nations country offices, and other stakeholders. These activations are generally designed to produce measurable and verifiable results in the countries of implementation, and showcase the leadership of those countries and their leaders in the advancing of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The five Pillars of the Pathway to Solutions Initiative

13. The Pathway to Solutions Initiative is built on five pillars: supporting leaders; improving the quality of higher education; leveraging the media; youth development; and sport and culture for the Red Card Campaign.

The first pillar involves recognizing, supporting and mobilizing effective leaders, across sectors, as champions for positive change and the SDGs. These include governmental leaders such as Heads of State and Government, Ministers and Mayors, as well as leaders in other sectors such as business, academia, civil society and art and culture. ARDN provides them and the countries, cities, societies, communities and organizations they serve, with technical support and advice, in order to enhance their capacities and reach. ARDN understands that the more these leaders receive recognition amongst their constituents and across the world, the more effective they can be in driving social good. By providing these leaders a platform, and developing and highlighting them as role models in their respective areas, ARDN helps to maximize their positive effects on society and the world

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The second pillar involves leveraging the media to build public awareness of stories of hope and change. ARDN has spent decades cultivating personal relationships with journalists and media outlets. By leveraging these relationships, and providing training and other opportunities to journalists and the media, such as through press trips, to learn about the leaders ARDN works with and the countries and communities they serve, ARDN helps to facilitate the telling of stories that will showcase positive leadership in Africa and the African diaspora, integrate the SDGs into societal discourse, increase the capacities and reach of these leaders in driving social change, and shape a more hopeful and positive narrative on Africa, the diaspora and their people.

The third pillar involves developing leadership capacities of and opportunity for young people. ARDN provides youth leaders an enabling environment to discuss and develop solutions to problems facing their countries and communities, and the opportunity to interact with and learn from more established leaders.

The fourth pillar focuses upon the importance of academia in shaping young people to become effective global citizens, and facilitates exchanges between educators and academic institutions, as well as the strengthening of educational capacities and curricula, in order to support the ability of young people to lead and thrive, and to become significant contributors to their countries and communities.

The fifth pillar involves utilizing the convening powers of sports and cultures as entry points for the Red Card Campaign. ARDN recognizes that sports and cultures are universal languages that bring individuals, countries and communities together no matter what their background and their economic status. Sports and Cultures have the capacity to bridge various divides.

About ARDN

14. ARDN is an internationally operating non-governmental organization headquartered in New York, with the status of a United States 501(c)(3) public charity. ARDN is formally associated with, and has entered into a series of memoranda of understanding and implementing partner agreements with, several United Nations system entities.

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ARDN maintains a presence in over eighty countries in Africa and the African diaspora, and maintains a number of regional and country offices on the continent.

ARDN's mission is to accelerate the attainment of the African renaissance by advocating for and supporting United Nations programs and priorities. To this end, ARDN mobilizes the passion of government, educators, artists, intellectuals, the private sector, civil society and youth, using the power of art, sport and culture as vectors for creating a better world. From 2013–2019, ARDN served as the Secretariat of the United Nations Senior Africans Group, a forum for senior United Nations officials and ambassadors, from Africa, to address and resolve issues of common concern between the United Nations and the continent. ARDN currently serves as the Secretariat for the Global Alliance of Mayors and Leaders from Africa and of African Descent, a coordinating body which works to focus the efforts of leaders at all levels of government and in intergovernmental organizations towards improving the situation of Africans and people of African descent.

Conclusion: This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. 75 years ago, the Governments of the world declared that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. We need to push harder, fight harder to ensure that the choices, voices and leadership of women can be heard today so that our Mothers, our sisters, daughters, granddaughters and great granddaughters can enjoy at last true freedom and equality today. Thank you very much.

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