

**Transcript for Thursday, June 1, 2023, at 3 pm**

**UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent Session**

Hello and thank you, Mister Chair for allowing me to address this distinguished body. I am the Reverend Dr. Sheila Harvey, a United Church of Christ pastor and author of Messages of Hope: Preaching Peace and Justice for All. It is my distinct pleasure to serve as a representative of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, at the World Council of Churches.

Reimagining an equitable global system for all Peoples of African Descent regardless of age, gender identity, ability, or sexual orientation is necessary for the work of both Reparatory Justice and Data Collection. As data shows that Reparatory Justice is vital to the work of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. But for the Forum to be effective, it will require adequate funding. Currently, the United Nations funds less than 2 percent of its budget for all racial justice efforts. We must do better if we are to eradicate a system built on racism.

Twenty-two years ago, at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the Ecumenical Caucus Statement was read by Archbishop Desmond Tutu stating that: “Racism is a sin. It is contrary to God’s will for love, peace, equality, justice, and compassion for all. It is an affront to human dignity and a gross violation of human rights.” God’s message of hope is also found in the Book of Psalm 72:3, ERV, which says, “Let there be peace and justice throughout the land, known on every mountain and hill.” Clearly, the theological foundation for the Forum has been laid.

Now, we seek to live into this hope. For instance, the first UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent held in Geneva convened approximately 300 participants. And today, more than 1000 participants of the Forum have gathered here in New York. The Forum is building momentum. So, let us continue spreading the good news about the UN’s global effort to address the sin of racism from the transatlantic slave trade to the structural and systemic racism that followed and continues.

Let us also continue calling on the global community to adequately fund an equitable global education, equal opportunity employment, recreation, quality healthcare, environmental protection, socio-economic development, criminal justice reform, and equal integration into the global community for all people of African descent, which is necessary and long overdue.

As such, my recommendation to the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent is to create a Global Reparatory Justice Commission and a Global Data Collection Committee in partnership with Civil Society to collectively provide statistics that call for a more robust budget from the United Nations, its Member States, and NGOs. Both tools can be used to make visible the need for our global society to live with “love, peace, equality, justice, and compassion for all.”

Thank you, Mister Chair, for the privilege of my time.