

**Opening session of the third session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**  
**Talking Points for the statement of H.E. Mr. Omar Zniber, President of the Human Rights Council**

**Palais des Nations, 16 April 2024**

Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour and a pleasure to address you today, in my capacity of President of the Human Rights Council, at the opening of the third session of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent.

The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent was established not only to serve as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African Descent, but also to act as an advisory body to the Human Rights Council.

Last September, at its 54<sup>th</sup> session, the Human Rights Council considered the first report of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, which contained the outcomes of this Forum's first and second sessions. The report provided concrete recommendations on the drafting of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent. It additionally provided recommendations on global reparatory justice and on an evidence-based approach to addressing systemic and structural racism, among other issues.

These recommendations are intended to guide the Member States in undertaking important legislative and policy measures which should effectively tackle racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Extensive discussions at the Human Rights Council, through the engagement with the various anti-racism mechanisms and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, have shed light on the ongoing and pervasive nature of structural racial discrimination faced by people of African descent in all aspects of their lives.

This is why, more than ever, our efforts to end racism and racial discrimination must be strengthened. It is the collective responsibility of States and all concerned stakeholders to address structural and systemic racial discrimination and its root causes in order to ensure concrete progress.

In this regard, at its most recent session in March, the Human Rights Council also received an update from the Inter-governmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, regarding the progress made on the draft UN Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of the Human Rights of People of African Descent.

Such a declaration would provide crucial guidance and constitute a significant and decisive step forward in achieving the full enjoyment of all human rights by people of African descent. The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent was mandated to consider this declaration and has already made valuable recommendations.

As 2024 marks the final year of the International Decade for People of African Descent, it is essential that we take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the programme of activities of the International Decade and reflect on the way forward, with a view of ensuring recognition, justice, and development for people of African descent.

I look forward to the discussions that will be held during this third session of the Permanent Forum, which will address the future of the International Decade, alongside other timely and crucial issues such as reparations, education, and culture and recognition.

As an advisory mechanism to the main intergovernmental human rights body of the United Nations, the Permanent Forum is uniquely equipped to guide States' efforts in making such progress.

I encourage all States and relevant stakeholders to actively and constructively engage in the discussions of the Permanent Forum and to value each other's expertise and experiences. It is through this proactive involvement with the Council's mechanisms that we can achieve the full inclusion and equal enjoyment of all human rights for people of African descent without discrimination of any kind.

I wish you every success during these three full days of debate and reflection, with the aim to counter this racism phenomena in our common and legitimate struggle against it. Human Rights run contrary to racism and cannot be enjoyed individually or collectively, in an accepted manner, with the persistence of racism within our societies. Diversity and respect are fundamental for getting and living together.

Thank you.

**BACKGROUND:**

*Third session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent*

- The third session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent will take place from 16 to 19 April 2024 in Palais des Nations, Geneva. The programme of work will address the following issues: Reparations, Sustainable Development & Economic Justice; Education: Overcoming Systemic Racism and Historic Harm in Education: Culture & Recognition; and the Second International Decade. In addition, more than 30 side events will be held.
- The opening session will take place on 16 April 2024, at 10am with a high level segment to be participated by a number of dignitaries including video messages from the Secretary General, President of the General Assembly, among others, the Deputy High Commissioner, along with the Executive Director of UNFPA, the Director General of WHO, and the Minister of Racial Equality of Brazil, the Special Representative on Racial Justice of the US are some of the confirmed participants, with some additional participants to be expected for the high level segment.

#### *Establishment and mandate of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent*

- In November 2014, the General Assembly decided, in its resolution 69/16 on the programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, to establish a forum to serve as a consultation mechanism. The Permanent Forum was formally operationalized in August 2021 by General Assembly resolution 75/314, pursuant to which the Permanent Forum was established as a consultative mechanism for people of African descent and other relevant stakeholders as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent, as well as an advisory body to the Human Rights Council.
- Its membership was fully constituted on 8 March 2022. The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent consists of 10 members, including 5 members nominated by Governments and elected by the General Assembly and 5 members appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council following consultation with the Bureau and the regional groups through their coordinators, on the basis of broad consultations with organizations of people of African descent.
- The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent was mandated, inter alia, to contribute to the full political, economic and social inclusion of people of African descent in the societies in which they live as equal citizens without discrimination of any kind and to consider the elaboration of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent.
- The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent held its first session in Geneva from 5 to 8 December 2022 and its second session in New York from 30 May to 2 June 2023. In both sessions, the President of the Human Rights Council delivered a statement at the opening session. The sessions were attended by over 700 representatives of Member States, United Nations mechanisms, bodies, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, regional organizations, national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, academics and experts on issues relating to people of African descent.
- The Chair of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent presented the first report of the Permanent Forum to the Human Rights Council at its 54th session during an interactive

dialogue. The report presented the outcomes of its first and second sessions and provided concrete recommendations on the drafting of a United Nations declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent; the Second Decade for People of African Descent; global reparatory justice; pan-Africanism for dignity, justice and peace; sustainable development agenda; evidence-based approach to addressing systemic and structural racism; transnational migration; health, well-being and intergenerational trauma; and resources and accessibility.