

**Statement by the Honourable Oneidge Walrond M.P., Minister of  
Tourism, Industry and Commerce to the Third Session of the  
Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**

Madam Chair,

Thank you for according me and Guyana, the privilege of participating in this high-level segment of the opening ceremony. We are honoured to be part of this gathering to collectively address issues relating “***to improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent***”.

I am pleased to extend congratulations to Dr. June Soomer, on assumption of Chair, and extend thank Ms. Epsy Campbell Barr of Costa Rica for her stewardship over the Forum. Dr. Soomer is “a distinguished daughter/citizen of the Caribbean Community”.

Guyana, as a multicultural and multi-ethnic society, is mindful of and keen to ensure that our population in its entirety enjoys the best possible quality of life our country can afford. In that regard we are mindful of the mandate of this Permanent Forum as set out in the United Nations’ General Assembly Resolution 75/314.

Chair, we note that the panels in this session of the Forum will address the issues of: *Reparations, Sustainable Development & Economic Justice; Education: Overcoming Systemic Racism and Historic Harm; and Culture & Recognition.*

We note also that CARICOM has been at the forefront of demanding reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans. Guyana is fully committed to the CARICOM position, and His Excellency President Irfaan Ali is on record as having added his voice to the call for the need for reparations.

Consequently, we have established a National Reparations Committee within the framework of a 10-point Plan agreed by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We provide financial support to this Committee and are proud to have facilitated the presence of its Chair at this Session.

Regarding the call for a Second International Decade for People of African Descent, we take note of the merits in the call and unreservedly support the extension of the Decade.

Guyana looks forward to contributing to the efforts ***toward improving the conditions of people of African descent***” both by supporting the work of this Forum and by continuing to craft and implement programmes that will redound to the benefit of Guyanese of African Descent.

In closing, I look forward to fruitful engagements and healthy dialogue making for a Session that yields tangible progress towards the realization of the objectives of the Durban Declaration.

Thank you.