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**Opening Ceremony of the Third Session of the
Permanent Forum on People of African
Descent**

Pre-recorded video message

**Theme: " The Second International Decade for
People of African Descent: Addressing
Systemic Racism, Reparatory Justice, and
Sustainable Development"**

Dear Chair,

**Dear members of the Permanent Forum on
People of African Descent,**

**UNESCO and the Social and Human Sciences
Sector that I lead, is proud to be a consistent
partner of this gathering, making Afro-
descendants' voices heard at international level.**

The International Decade for People of African Descent, supported by UNESCO from the start, ends this year. Despite advancements made, many challenges remain for the respect of Afro-descendants' dignity and rights.

Did you know that the unemployment rate of Black Americans is twice that of White Americans?

And that in Europe, 45% of the Afro-descendants have experienced racial discrimination in 2022?

Even sport, that should be the playground for team spirit and cohesion, is plagued by racism. Discriminatory behaviours in football rose by 65% last year across the world.

And a few days ago, we witnessed footballer Vinicius Junior, our Goodwill Ambassador, bursting into tears due to constant racist attacks.

It is therefore no surprise that mental health issues of Afro-descendants' are increasing.

But racism is also very expensive for our societies!

A recent study conducted by 'Citigroup' shows that if the US addressed racism, 5 trillion dollars could be added to its GDP over the next five years! This inspired UNESCO to develop a study on the cost of racism in collaboration with Brown University, that will provide policy makers with tools to tackle racism while strengthening their economy.

So how can we forcefully combat racism together?

We need evidence-based policies and practices, informed by data to make inequalities visible.

But this is not enough! We also have to change mindsets and establish platforms for collective action. This is precisely the role of our annual Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination, which has become the place to be for government representatives, academia and civil society to share challenges and good practices, and forge impactful partnerships.

I am happy to invite you to join the 4th edition of the Global Forum which will take place in Barcelona in January 2025.

In our third edition in São Paulo, we presented the UNESCO Anti-Racism Toolkit to help countries develop their national action plans. We also launched the Network of Anti-Racism Officials to build a community of Champions advocating for a change of mindset, and legal and institutional frameworks.

We know that youth are tomorrow's change-makers. Yet, young Afro-descendants not only face more obstacles but also have to overcome a legacy of trauma. But if there is a legacy of trauma, there is also a legacy of resilience and meaningful contributions.

Through our Masterclasses against Racism and Discrimination, we have trained 14,000 students and their teachers to combat racist stereotypes and foster a culture of resilience.

Throughout 2024, as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of our Routes of Enslaved Peoples programme, this resilience is also highlighted in numerous events, and I invite all of you to join our high-level ceremony scheduled this September at our Headquarters.

But remembering and understanding the consequences of the slave trade is also a form of healing and restorative justice. In 2022, we launched the UNESCO healing programme, and in 2023, the “Network of Places of History and Memory” was introduced to provide skills enhancement for local populations, eco-friendly cultural tourism and city-twinning, reinforcing the links between Africa and its Diasporas.

And later this year, UNESCO and the ‘Guardian Foundation’ will launch a series of dialogues on restorative justice from enslavement. This topic

will be analyzed further during our side-events on Thursday with the Guardian Foundation, and the 'Education System for an Anti-Racist Transformation' and the Colombian authorities.

Lastly, as Epsy Campbell Barr concludes her mandate as Chair of the Forum, I commend her strong dedication and commitment, and I know that she will continue to fight for our joint cause.

Thank you.