

Madame Chair
Fellow Members of the Permanent Forum
Distinguished delegates
Civil society representatives
Friends and Colleagues
Ladies, Gentlemen and Non-binary comrades

Greetings everyone, this is a glorious day and session ahead of us. People of African descent may be last in terms of our enjoyment of human rights across Europe, across the Americas and much of the rest of the world—but let us be first in imagining another future with social and international systems and structures in which Black lives matter. Not as a matter of utopia. We have no time for utopias. But as a matter of honoring basic principles of law, of justice, of democracy and human rights that morally speaking, as a matter of legal or political principle, no one's joy, no one's freedom, no one's subjection to suffering, violence or want counts more or less than any other's. This is not the stuff of utopia, but the stuff of any society, social or international order based on equality before law, justice, and equity.

Africa may be the continent that has contributed the least to greenhouse emissions, but the one that is hardest hit by climate change, extreme droughts, rainfalls, and mudslides. People of African descent in the Caribbean are still struggling with social, economic, and cultural conditions that is the result of histories of enslavement, colonialism and a structurally unequal and indeed violent and inhumane Atlantic economy that became a blueprint for a global economy that today is ravishing our planet. People of African descent, Africans too, those of us who have the fortune to be here, whether as civil society, as representatives of Member States, as UN staff or as independent Members of this UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent—we are part of the solution and so let us act accordingly and during the coming days focus on constructive policy recommendations for a better future. For reparatory justice to correct systems and structures of economic injustice and environmental destruction. For an education that lays the foundation for equitable societies and that allows all individuals and societies to flourish without discrimination. For a culture and society and international community that honors and respects the cultural integrity and expressions of people of African descent. And for a Second International Decade for People of African Descent even more fruitful and impactful than the first one.

For the memory of the ancestors, for present and future generations, give thanks and be and do well. Thank you.