

Third Session of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent

Panel: The Second International Decade for People of African Descent: Expectations and Challenges

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, April 18, 2024: 3-6 pm, Room XX

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Vice-Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

(Mark against delivery)

Thank you Chair and greetings to everyone on behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Before I proceed I wish to give thanks and honour to those ancestors whose rationale for their struggle might not have been articulated as Recognition, Justice and Development – a theme I hope we will keep for the Second Decade - but that is in essence what they wanted: Chief Tacky, Queen Nana, Kitty Scarlet and Sam Sharpe of Jamaica; Boukman Dutty, Cecile Fatiman and Dessalines of Ayiti; Abba of Antigua, Nanny Grigg and Bussa of Barbados; Susanna, Amba, Phati, Lucretia of Guyana; Abenkina and Adelaide Disson of Trinidad & Tobago; and so many, many more.

Expectations:

As we anticipate the Second Decade for People of African Descent, people trafficked and chattelized and emancipated with nothing but freedom, important as that freedom was, my hope is that all States will implement the Programme of Activities (POA) of the first Decade which has not been fully implemented by any State party, including the completion of the unfinished business of recognizing these heroes and heroines with tangible sites of memory because they are deserving of our respect. Symbolic decolonization is a way to express pride in our own heroes and heroines; and their experiences must be centred in the reparation campaign.

Their expectation would be that we do not betray their struggle but that we place at the core of our lobbying for a second decade what the DDPA later articulated:

“...historical injustices have undeniably contributed to the poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity that affect many people in different parts of the world, in particular in developing countries;

This means that a priority for the second decade must be to achieve its goal of development and greater wealth creation for African people, including through reparatory justice. In developing a reparatory justice framework we should add the capitalocene, a different conceptual framework for climate reparation, which places global change in a new, ecologically oriented history of capitalism. I should also explain that I use the term wealth creation as it is more empowering than poverty eradication. Put another way, we must commit to the Right to Development, recognizing that poverty is both a cause and a consequence of the discriminatory consequences of colonialism, as the DDPA reinforced.

Another expectation is that States parties will use as a guide not only the programme of activities for the second Decade, but also the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and CERD General Recommendations, the purpose of which is to provide, in light of the Committee's experience, practical guidance on the meaning of articles under the Convention. I refer particularly to General Recommendations No. 33 on follow up to the Durban Review Conference, No. 34 on racial discrimination and people of African descent, No.35 on combatting racist hate speech and No. 36 on preventing and combatting racial profiling by law enforcement officials which outline specific actions to be taken to protect human rights and eliminate all forms of racial discrimination against people of African descent.

As CERD is too often told in its interactive dialogue with some States that they have few people of African descent in their country and therefore the IDPAD is not relevant for them, I would hope that such States by now understand that anti-black and racist ideologies develop even before actual encounters with a black person. As long as one watches films and TV, one can develop anti-black prejudices. So, another expectation for the Second International Decade is that we focus our education system more intensively on the roots of racialized thoughts and behaviours, especially to correct the narrative and empower the youth, to remove racial discrimination, in particular, anti-African discrimination, which is destroying our societies. It was the late Nelson Mandela who said: *I hate race discrimination most intensely and in all its manifestations. I have fought it all during my life; I fight it now, and will do so until the end of my days...* ". We need to embrace that quote and make it our own.

Challenges:

Challenges will accompany the support for and implementation of the Second Decade of course: opposition by some States parties; inadequate budgetary support, including from Member States and other donors, based on the current liquidity crisis. Nevertheless, as long as we as are united in our commitment to create societies in which racial discrimination, racial profiling and anti-black racism are eliminated, and in which we work towards wealth creation for people impoverished by colonialism and its legacies, we will succeed. As Meza Castillo has said: "a second International Decade is important because it is necessary to continue working in the fight against racial and systematic discrimination and injustice, even if it sounds repetitive." I agree with her that "we have to continue on this path to achieve the objectives of a more just and dignified society and ensure social and economic rights that have for too long been denied."

It will take courage: but as Marcus Garvey urges us to do: "lose not courage, lose not faith, go forward".
