

April 2024 – PFPAD Statement

Thank you, Madame Chair, distinguished guests, and comrades. My name is Abena Abraham. I am the co-founder and co-director of the Black Immigrant Collective and a Program Officer at Headwaters Foundation for Justice where I fund Black movement work across the state of Minnesota in the United States.

Over the course of the last few days, we will have robust conversations about a range of issues that impact people of African descent across the globe. Missing from the conversation is the issue of migration.

We know that the main reason people of African descent are forced to migrate is due to the disregard of Black peoples and nations. In this public space, I want to say that the hostility, violence, intimidation, and intentional lack of resources on the part of the United States is unacceptable, especially against Black migrants.

When Black migrants finally make it to their new homes – they experience new forms of systematic and systemic racism. These experiences have detrimental impacts on the overall health and wellbeing of Black people. There are very few states within the United States that offer health benefits to people without immigration status.

When it comes to the overall discussion regarding migrants and immigration. Black migrants are often excluded or thought of last. This is especially true in all of the major sectors of life – healthcare, economic upward mobility, education, housing, and many more. These are all areas of life that are vital to the overall well being of any human. These spaces should be spaces of refuge, but they continue to be systems that continue to perpetuate the same discriminatory practices and systems Black people face in their everyday lives.

Today, I join the many voices before me to demand that irregular migration be decriminalized. There is absolutely no reason why someone should be locked up because they are seeking to make a new life elsewhere.

My recommendation is that member states call on the United States to end the discriminatory practice of detaining asylum seekers and honor its commitments to asylum rights; and to invite the UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent to make the issue of migration a permanent topic to be discussed.

Thank you!