

## **Statement**

### *Panel# 4: The Second International Decade for People of African Descent: Expectations and Challenges*

**From: The African Studies Centre Student & Youth Delegates**  
African Studies Centre, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada  
**April 2024**

We acknowledge that Canada's efforts towards the Decade have lacked proactive institutional responses and visibility, with significant initiatives by the Government of Canada only commencing in 2018. It is worth underscoring Canada's renewed commitment to continuing its involvement through 2028, as announced in February of 2024. Canada has the momentous opportunity to foster sustained engagement through vigorous advocacy and impactful initiatives aimed at addressing systemic issues of racism, justice, and opportunities for Black communities and individuals who identify as people of African descent in Canada, and their demand for accountability, and full advancement of the rights of people of African descent.

We stress the importance of strengthening youth voices, engagement and experiences in the Second International Decade for People of African Descent and amplifying youth voices and the agency of Black communities and civil society in shaping such agendas with greater accountability to the objectives and ethos of the Decade in Canada. Over recent months, we have witnessed a concerning rise in the number of refugees and incidents of anti-Black racism towards Africans and persons of African descent in Canada. This neglect and erasure are not new, but an ongoing crisis and failure to act. We believe this demands immediate responses and decisive actions to alleviate the plight of refugees and asylum seekers and to restore their human dignity and fundamental rights.

Recognizing the political, economic, and cultural importance of Africa's 'sixth region,' supporting and mobilising the diaspora, can further the Decade goals given Canada's sizable African and Afro-Caribbean diaspora.

We urge governments to advance the rights of people of African descent and uphold key principles and commitments of the Durban Declaration in all arenas of social, economic, political, and civic engagement.

We also advocate for sustained initiatives that promote dialogue, education, and awareness-building on systemic issues such as racism and discrimination, vital to fostering a culture of inclusivity and equity in all spheres and fora of social, cultural, political, and economic life. As stakeholders, we are eager to support such initiatives, mobilize youth, and contribute to programs addressing these intersecting issues with a specific focus on advocacy, protection of the rights of refugees in Canada, inclusion, and access to opportunities in terms of employment, housing, and health and well-being.

We aim to catalyze meaningful action and collaboration towards advancing the crosscutting thematic objectives of the Decade within the Canadian context and beyond. We invite all stakeholders and allies to join this collective endeavor, leveraging their expertise and resources to effect positive change and foster a more equitable society moving forward. We stress the urgency of addressing structural barriers to access opportunities and address challenges faced by individuals of African descent in Canada.

We advocate for implementing targeted policies and programs that facilitate economic empowerment, educational attainment, and social mobility within these communities, promoting their full recognition, justice, and development.

As Africans and people of African descent continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination due to systemic and structural racism, as well as institutionalized anti-Black racism, we urge to confront the historical and structural causes of racism to radically transform Black lives and futures, addressing reparative justice, the enduring legacy of colonization, and historical harms. We call for collaborations and transnational solidarity, at this critical juncture, to catalyze and sustain change and shift from rhetorical promises and discourses to radical practice towards transformative changes and futures.

We fully support the call for an extension to a second decade, through 2034, to accelerate change, uphold and protect the fundamental rights of people of African descent around the world and fulfill the unmet promises and commitment of the first decade. We urge the United Nations and governments to provide political leverage, practical means, greater institutional recognition, and adequate resource allocation to the Forum to deliver on the unfulfilled commitments of the first decade and accelerate change domestically, internationally, and globally for People of African Descent in the next decade 2025-2034 and beyond. We call on the United Nations to break the silo for the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and integrate its platform and agenda across delivery systems, within the Delivery as One ethos, and its global agendas, forging convergence and coherence with unceasing calls for various forms of justice reparative justice, gender justice, economic justice, and climate justice and the protection of the fundamental rights and dignity of people of African descent globally.

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