



Statement to the  
**32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent  
Economic Empowerment of People of African Descent**  
Geneva, Switzerland, May 1-5, 2023

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The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) have asked for input concerning “how systemic racism and global economic structures and financial mechanisms affect the economic and financial empowerment of people of African descent, tracing the trajectories and impacts of enslavement, colonisation, segregation, and apartheid over the centuries, and providing an analysis of anticipated future trends to draw conclusions and make recommendations.” As President of the Balanta B'urassa History & Genealogy Society in America and a member of the National Coalition of Black for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) International Affairs Commission and Health Commission, I submit this statement and ask that WGEPAD consider the following:

1. There is a profound proverb based on the principle that in order to solve a problem, you must go to the origin or root of the problem or else risk sprouting new growth of the problem.
2. The systemic racism and global economic structures and financial mechanisms affecting people of African descent both at home on the African continent and abroad in the African Diaspora, have their origin in a declaration of war made by Pope Nicholas V on June 18, 1452 in the Apostolic Edict or Papal Bull known as the *Dum Diversas*.<sup>1</sup>
3. The voyages initiated by Prince Henry of Portugal that would lead to the TransAtlantic Trafficking and Enslavement of People of African Descent were not thrusts into the unknown, but part of a sustained attempt to **wrest control of an important economic artery from Africans** and stretched from a town called Sijilmasa in the North of the Sahara through to the great-gold bearing districts of Bambuk and Bure, bounded on the north by the Senegal, on the west by the Faleme, on the east by the Niger and on the south by the Tinkisso. It was the region to which the great trans-Sahara gold route led,

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<sup>1</sup> See Endnote 1

either by way of Timbuktu or Walata across to Egypt and was made famous in 1324 when Mansa Musa dazzled Cairo with his prodigal display of wealth. It was for centuries the goal of all who traveled this ancient road. Control of this trade was Prince Henry's initial objective. <sup>2</sup>

4. The *Dum Diversas* declaration of war was followed up with monopoly contracts known as "Asientos" which were variously granted by the Catholic Church to private merchants from 1518 to 1595, to Portugal from 1595 to 1640, to the Genoese (Italy) from 1662 to 1671, to the Dutch and Portuguese from 1671 to 1701, to France 1701-1713, the British 1713 to 1750, and the Spanish 1765 to 1779. In the United States, several colonies became combatants to the Dum Diversas War when they legalized slavery: Massachusetts in 1641; Connecticut in 1650; Virginia in 1657 and Maryland in 1663. Other colonies followed and the United States of America officially entered the *Dum Diversas War* trafficking of people from Guine after American independence in 1776.
5. For more than 6 centuries and 30 generations, the theft of the fruit of labor of the people of African lineage and heritage on both sides of the Atlantic, and the nearly incalculable wealth that it produced, has redistributed income and wealth earned by the people of African lineage and heritage on both sides of the Atlantic to generations of people of European lineage and heritage on both sides of the Atlantic, leaving the former impoverished as a group and the latter relatively privileged as a group. <sup>3</sup> The Asiento contract ensured that the Catholic Church received licensing fees, tariffs, taxes, and other fees, securing 50% of the profits to the Church. Thus, no matter who held the Asiento contract, the Catholic Church was the single greatest beneficiary of the slave trade.<sup>4</sup>
6. The devastating systemic racism and global economic structures and financial mechanisms affecting people of African descent both at home on the African continent and abroad in the African Diaspora, was re-organized following the end of the Trans-Atlantic Trafficking and Enslavement of people of African Descent during the Scramble for Africa from 1876 to 1912, and specifically at the Berlin Conference of 1884.<sup>5</sup>
7. The opportunities, pathways and approaches that will achieve economic liberation of people of African descent must necessarily set as ***its overriding imperative the reverse engineering and undoing of the Berlin Conference and the Dum Diversas War***. This would return Africa to its previous condition of **a borderless, prosperous and economically independent continental territory** allowing the free movement of people and goods which existed prior to the invasion of the Europeans following the *Dum Diversas* declaration of war and its succeeding Asiento contracts that created the conditions for the Scramble for Africa and its resolution at the Berlin Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> See Endnote 2

<sup>3</sup> See Endnote 3

<sup>4</sup> See Endnote 4

<sup>5</sup> See Endnote 5

8. Within the Legal and Policy Context, the next step is for the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent (PFPAD) to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the status of Afro descendant people who are prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention.<sup>6</sup>
9. Within the context of addressing reparations for people of African descent, the next step is for UN organs and member states to engage the Vatican, as the initiator, principal benefactor of the crime against humanity known as the Trans-Atlantic Trafficking and Enslavement of People of African Descent, as well as signatory to the Geneva Convention, and facilitate the process by which the Vatican can begin to fulfill its legal obligations to pay reparations by divesting itself of its possessions and wealth and returning it to African people at home and abroad through payments made, for example, to the Diaspora Pan African Capital Fund being proposed by the upcoming 8th Pan African Congress Part 1 to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe later this year or some other such entities. This would then set the precedent for all the enslaving individuals, institutions, businesses and colonial powers who are also signatories to the Geneva Convention, to fulfill their legal obligations as partners in crime with the Vatican.
10. Within the context of the agency of people of African descent as one of, if not the, strongest forces in their own economic empowerment, the African Union, representing the governments of the African People, must quicken the complete implementation of its ***Decision on Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport*** at the African Union 27th Ordinary Session in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2016; the ***Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment*** at the 29th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa in January/February 2018; as well as the ***Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area***, March 21, 2018. Moreover, this must, according to the African Union Article 3(q) and subsequent decisions, ***“invite and encourage the full participation of Africans in the Diaspora in the building of the African Union in its capacity as an important part of our Continent.”*** The latter requires the recognition of the right to return of the prisoners of the *Dum Diversas* war and the legal obligation of all parties involved and signatories to the Geneva Convention, to provide for their “final release and repatriation” with compensation via reparations. This would represent a significant African “brain gain.” Reparations paid to the proposed Diaspora Pan African Capital Fund would then enable the return and reunification of the African Diaspora, properly capitalized, to invest in strategic industries, reinvest in African Community Partnerships, and provide an alternative to foreigners currently securing international contracts in Africa and expropriating African wealth. Such a shift would restructure the Berlin Conference economic relationships in such a way as to benefit the African people.

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<sup>6</sup> See Endnote 6

## ENDNOTES:

1. Specifically, the *Dum Diversas* declaration of war stated,

“we grant to you full and free power, through the Apostolic authority by this edict, to invade, conquer, fight, subjugate the Saracens and pagans, and other infidels and other enemies of Christ, and **wherever established their Kingdoms, Duchies, Royal Palaces, Principalities and other dominions, lands, places, estates, camps and any other possessions, mobile and immobile goods found in all these places and held in whatever name, and held and possessed by the same** Saracens, Pagans, infidels, and the enemies of Christ, also realms, duchies, royal palaces, principalities and other dominions, lands, places, estates, camps, possessions of the king or prince or of the kings or princes, and **to lead their persons in perpetual servitude**, and to apply and **appropriate realms, duchies, royal palaces, principalities and other dominions, possessions and goods of this kind to you and your use and your successors the Kings of Portugal.**”

<https://www.balanta.org/news/eb32mi8722rk67dizuecl5qjriajc9>,

<https://www.balanta.org/history/the-dum-diversas-war-and-the-incomplete-independence-of-guinea-bissau>

2. An anonymous writer of the twelfth century describes the bartering of salt for gold as follows:

“In the sands of the country is gold, treasure inexpressible. They have much gold, and merchants trade with salt for it, taking the salt on camels from the salt mines. They start from a town called Sijilmasa... and travel in the desert as it were upon the sea, having guides to pilot them by the stars or rocks in the desert. They take provisions for six months, and when they reach Ghana, they weigh their salt and sell it against a certain unit of weight of gold, and sometimes against double, or more of the gold unit, according to the market and the supply.”

Timbuktu first became an important market as early as the eleventh century. The notable part it so long played in the commercial life of the interior of northwestern Africa was due to its geographical position. Situated close to the navigable waterway of the Niger and on the threshold of the desert, it was the meeting place of those who traveled by water with those who traveled by land – the people of the Sudan and the people of the desert. The former brought gold, grain and kola nuts which they exchanged for the salt, dates, and merchandise of the Maghreb. By the end of the thirteenth century it had become an important entrepot for the trade between Jenne, higher up the Niger, and Walata, and was trading not only with all parts of the Maghreb but also with Egypt.

In Africa Prince Henry of Portugal first heard of the ancient caravan traffic of the Sahara bringing gold, slaves, ivory, and ebony from the remote countries of the negroes, already known as Guinea. It was this rich trade which kept the ports of Barbary thronged with Christian galleys bartering the trade goods of Europe with the Moorish merchants who controlled this traffic. Though at various times during the fifteenth century the directors of

Portuguese policy toyed with the idea of territorial expansion in northern Africa, ***with the object of securing the trans-Saharan traffic for themselves, an alternative method and one promising more success was to attempt to establish contact with the sources of the wealth by sea***, and so divert trade from the land routes and the Moorish middlemen. This motive is, in fact, attributed to Prince Henry by Dr. J. Munzer, who moved in official Portuguese circles, and may here be recording a tradition. ***'Knowing that the King of Tunis, that is, of Carthage, obtained much gold each year, he (Prince Henry) sent spies to Tunis, and having ascertained that this king dispatched merchants to southern Ethiopia who exchanged their goods for slaves and gold, determined to do by sea what the king of Tunis had done for many years by land.'*** It is stated in the Introduction to *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* Volume II that,

“Here, by the capture of Ceuta (area north of Fez on the African side of the Strait of Gibraltar south of Spain), Prince Henry gained a starting-point for his work; here he is said (probably with truth) to have gained his earliest knowledge of the interior of Africa; here especially he was brought in contact with those Sudan and Saharan caravans which, coming down to the Mediterranean coast, brought news, to those who sought it, of the Senegal and Niger, ***of the Negro kingdoms beyond the desert, and particularly of the Gold land of 'Guinea.'*** Here also, from a knowledge thus acquired, he was able to form a more correct judgment of the course needed for the rounding or circumnavigation of Africa, of ***the time, expense, and toil necessary for that task***, and of the probable support or hindrance his mariners were to look for on their route.”

Under King Edward, ***the colony at Ceuta rapidly became a drain on the Portuguese treasury***, and it was realized that without the city of Tangier, possession of Ceuta was worthless. In 1437, Duarte's brothers Henry and Ferdinand persuaded him to launch an attack on the Marinid sultanate of Morocco. The resulting attack on Tangier, led by Henry, was a debacle. Failing to take the city in a series of assaults, the Portuguese siege camp was soon itself surrounded and starved into submission by a Moroccan relief army. In the resulting treaty, Henry promised to deliver Ceuta back to the Marinids in return for allowing the Portuguese army to depart unmolested. ***The Portuguese needed to find a new source of wealth.***

It appears fair to say, therefore, that by 1448 the Portuguese were approaching Sierra Leone and had begun the detailed examination of the coastline between Cape Verde and the latter landmark. ***It is important to realize this, so that the voyages of the next decade can be appreciated in their true light, that is, as the completion of the work of their predecessors, and as commercial ventures, rather than as voyages of discovery.***

3. The Dum Diversas declaration of war launched the criminal Trans-Atlantic Trafficking of People with African Lineage and Heritage that consisted of a minimum of 36,000 voyages that are documented in Davis Eltis' *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*.

Thomas Cooper, in the *Supplement to Mr. Cooper's Letter on the Slave Trade*, suggests that for every 100 people with African lineage and heritage who were kidnapped, trafficked and enslaved, 1,000 were murdered in European inspired or exacerbated warfare on the African continent, 20 were murdered on the "way of death" on the African continent and the Middle Passage, and 70 were murdered during the "seasoning" process, for a total of 170 million deaths;

Joseph Miller, in *The Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830*, suggests that for every 100 people with African lineage and heritage who were seized, 74 reached the marketplace in the interior, 64 arrived at the slave forts and the holding pens on the coast, 57 stepped onto soil across the Atlantic, 48 lived to behold their first master or mistress, and only 28 to 30 of the original people with African lineage and heritage seized were alive three to four years later;

Thus, as a result of the **Dum Diversas Declaration of War**:

Portugal and Brazil were and are responsible for at least 7,300 slave voyages (26.8%) and at least 5,074,900 (45.9%) of the people who were forcibly, illegally, and immorally transported from the African continent and, using Cooper's order of magnitude, were and are responsible for the murder, kidnapping and enslavement of more than 73 million people of African lineage and heritage;

Britain was and is responsible for at least 11,632 slave voyages (42.7%), and that least 3,112,300 (28.1%) of the people who were forcibly, illegally and immorally transported from the African continent, thereby being responsible for the murder, kidnapping and enslavement of 52.2 million people of African lineage and heritage;

France was and is responsible for at least 4,038 voyages (14.8%) and at least 1,456,000 (13.2%) of the people who were forcibly, illegally and immorally transported from the African continent, thereby being responsible for the murder, kidnapping and enslavement of 21.6 million people of African lineage and heritage;

Spain was and is responsible for at least 1,116 slave voyages (4.1%), and at least 517,000 (4.7%) of the people who were forcibly, illegally and immorally transported from the African continent, thereby being responsible for the murder, kidnapping and enslavement of 8.5 million people of African lineage and heritage;

The United States was and is responsible for at least 834 slave voyages (2.3%) from 1776 to 1808 and at least 114,960 (1%) of the people who were forcibly, illegally and immorally transported from the African continent, thereby being responsible for the murder, kidnapping and enslavement of 1.7 million people of African lineage and heritage;

Almost every country of the Western Hemisphere, and especially the British Mainland of North America, the British Leewards, the British Windwards and Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, the Spanish American Mainland, the Spanish Caribbean, Northeast Brazil, Bahia, Southeast Brazil and other areas, participated in some degree, in the criminal Trans-Atlantic Trafficking of people with African lineage and heritage;

40.6% of all kidnapped and trafficked people of African lineage and heritage were shipped to Brazil, 29% to the British colonies in the Caribbean and North America, 14.3% to the Spanish colonies in the Americas, 12% to the French colonies, and 2.7% to the Dutch Americas;

#### 4. Wealth of the Catholic Church

Religious organizations [\[edit\]](#)

| Organization  | Worth (billion USD) | Country        | Notes   |
|---|---------------------|----------------|---|
| <a href="#">The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</a> | 100.0               | worldwide      | One whistleblower estimated it at 200 billion. <sup>[4]</sup>                         |
| <a href="#">Catholic Church in Germany</a>                      | 26.0                | Germany        | <sup>[5]</sup>  |
| <a href="#">Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple</a>                    | 22.0                | India          | As of 2011. <sup>[6]</sup> Some sources estimated it at 1 trillion. <sup>[7][8]</sup> |
| <a href="#">Catholic Church in Australia</a>                    | 20.5                | Australia      | <sup>[9]</sup>  |
| <a href="#">Seventh-day Adventists</a>                          | 15.6                | United States  | As of 1998 <sup>[10]</sup>  |
| <a href="#">Church of England</a>                               | 11.97 (8.7 GBP)     | United Kingdom | <sup>[11]</sup>   |
| <a href="#">Trinity Church</a>                                  | 6.0                 | United States  | <sup>[12][13][14]</sup>   |
| <a href="#">The Vatican (part of the Catholic Church)</a>       | 4.0                 | Vatican City   | <sup>[15]</sup>   |
| <a href="#">Opus Dei (part of the Catholic Church)</a>          | 2.0                 | worldwide      | <sup>[16]</sup>   |
| <a href="#">Catholic Church in the Philippines</a>              | 2.0                 | Philippines    | <sup>[17]</sup>   |
| <a href="#">Church of Scientology</a>                           | 2.0                 | United States  | <sup>[18][19]</sup>   |

- On December 5, 1857, David Livingston gave an address to Cambridge University stating, *‘I beg to direct your attention to Africa; I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open: Do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you!’*

In *The Scramble for Africa: White Man’s Conquest of the Dark Continent* from 1876 to 1912, Thomas Pakenham writes,

“Ever since Roman times, Europe had been nibbling at the mysterious continent to the south. By the mid 1870s, much was still mysterious [Siphiwe note: to them]. . . . But **no explorer had penetrated far . . . towards the interior**. No [European] knew which was Africa’s greatest river or where it led. Europeans pictured most of the continent as ‘vacant’: legally *res nullius*, a no-man’s land. If there were states and rulers, they were African, If there were treasures they were buried in African soil. **But beyond the trading posts on the coastal fringe, and**

***strategically important colonies in Algeria and South Africa, Europe saw no reason to intervene.***

**Suddenly, in half a generation, the Scramble gave Europe virtually the whole continent:** including thirty new colonies and protectorates, 10 million square miles of new territory and 110 million . . . new subjects, acquired by one method or another. . . . [T] rival nations [were] Germany, Italy, Portugal, France and Britain (with Spain taking some scraps) and Britain and France were at each other's throats. At the center, exploiting the rivalry, stood one enigmatic individual and self-styled philanthropist, controlling the heart of the continent: Leopold II, King of the Belgians.

By the end of the century, the passions generated by the Scramble had helped to poison the political climate in Europe, brought Britain to the brink of a war with France, and precipitated a struggle with the Boers, the costliest, longest and bloodiest war since 1815 - and one of the most humiliating in British history. As for the pieces of the colonial cake, they have now become, ninety years later, for richer or for poorer (mainly for poorer) the forty-seven [Siphiwe note: now fifty-five] independent nations of Africa. . . .

The freelance promoters of the partition - the men who followed Livingstone out to Africa and scrambled greedily for their share - are now half-forgotten. In their day they were famous - and infamous - feted as heroes, denounced as brutes or humbugs. Each responded to Livingstone's call in his own fashion. But ***they all conceived of the crusade in terms of romantic nationalism.*** There were journalist-explorers like Henry Stanley, sailor-explorers like Pierre de Brazza, soldier-explorers like Frederick Lugard, pedagogue-explorers like Carl Peters, gold-and-diamond tycoons like Cecil Rhodes. Most of them were outsiders of one kind or another but no less ardent nationalists for that. ***To imperialism - a kind of 'race patriotism' - they brought a missionary zeal. Not only would they save Africa from itself, Africa would be the saving of their own countries.***

At first European governments were reluctant to intervene. But to most people in their electorates, there seemed a real chance of missing something. ***Africa was a lottery and a winning ticket might earn glittering prizes. There were dreams of El Dorado, of diamond mines and goldfields criss-crossing the Sahara.*** In Europe, these were the drab years of the Great Depression and mounting stocks of unsold Manchester cotton, Lyons silk and Hamburg gin. ***Perhaps Africa was the answer to the merchant's prayers.*** There might be new markets out there in this African garden of Eden. . . .

The West Africa Conference [known today as the Berlin Conference] began on Sunday, 15 November 1884. . . . [There were] nineteen plenipotentiaries, with fifteen assistants, representing fourteen great and lesser Powers."

According to Mark Malisa and Phillippa Nhengeze in *Pan-Africanism: A Quest for Liberation and the Pursuit of a United Africa*



“The partitioning of Africa at *the Berlin Conference not only led to the theft of resources, but to the creation of borders where previously there had been none, and the making of pseudo-states administered by Europeans using European legal systems.* According to Ngugi Wa Thiongo, the “Berlin Conference of 1884 literally fragmented and reconstituted Africa into British, French, Portuguese, German, Belgian, and Spanish Africa” (Wa Thiongo 2009, p. 3). Political, cultural, *and economic independence were lost in the process of colonialism.* However, instead of a vacuum, Europe used the colonial experience to impose its cultural memory in ways that would radically alter the course of African history and identity, as well as the potential unification of Africa. *With the partitioning of Africa, what had been previously one whole, suddenly became a landmass of several nation states.*

As a result of the Berlin Conference, Germany had German West Africa (Namibia) and German East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) as well as Togo and Cameroon. France, on the other hand, took possession of over ten territories, including the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Niger, Gambia, Morocco, Gabon, Algeria and Tunisia. To Britain went Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Egypt, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Botswana, Lesotho, and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) among others. Even Portugal colonized Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, and Guinea-Bissau (Chamberlain 1999). Delegates from 14 European countries convened and decided the fate of Africa and its people.

The masquerade of European rationality and the superiority of the European political system lasted until the emergence of Hitler and his rise to power and subsequent Nazism. Nazism revealed the shortcomings or moral bankruptcy of European philosophies and ideologies, especially with regard to the Holocaust (Armah 2010; Adorno 2005). Following the defeat of Germany, other European countries punished Germany by dispossessing it of its African colonies. *Colonies that had formerly belonged to Germany were given as spoils to new conquerors.*

In addition to dividing Africa among themselves, European nations also divided Africans from each other. This was mostly evident with the making of colonial borders. However, the colonial borders also quickly became religious and cultural borders, as colonialism was quickly followed by the imposition of different religious traditions, including variations of Christianity (Armah 2010; Wa Thiongo 2009). A byproduct of the division of Africa was the creation in the European imaginary, culture, and scholarship, of Egypt and parts of North Africa as separate from the rest of Africa, especially what is now called Africa South of the Sahara (Armah 2010; Bentahar 2011). European cartography defined Africa’s geographical and political identity. *The Berlin Conference, in many ways, created pseudo-nation states beholden to colonial powers (Emerson 1962).*

It formed the foundation for the continued destruction of African history, culture, and unity.”

6. See the **MANDATE FROM THE AFRO DESCENDANT PEOPLE ISSUED TO THE PERMANENT FORUM ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT TO REQUEST AN ADVISORY OPINION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE ON THEIR STATUS AS PRISONERS OF WAR UNDER THE GENEVA CONVENTION** that was delivered to PFPAD on April 5, 2023  
<https://www.balanta.org/news/taking-the-afro-descendates-case-to-the-international-court-of-justice-a-peoples-mandate-issued-to-the-permanent-forum-of-people-of-african-descent>