

## **HIGH-LEVEL EVENT ON REPARATORY JUSTICE FOR GLOBAL AFRICA**

***“Consolidating the normative framework for the fight for justice for victims of slavery, deportation and colonization: the contribution of international law and United Nations mechanisms for just and lasting reparations”***

***October 23, 2025 (UN office, Geneva)***

### **Panel II**

Your Excellency, Prof. Robert DUSSEY, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration, and Togolese Abroad.

Excellencies, Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representatives of Permanent Missions present

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Please permit me to stand on the existing protocols

It is always challenging to speak last at a great gathering like this; you either repeat what has already been said, which may sound boring to some, or you talk to a tired crowd. I will not bore you with a prepared script to avoid unnecessary repetition. Still, I will focus on the most critical points and recommendations, particularly the Diaspora perspectives and our concrete actions.

H.E Mme. Kadra AHMED HASSAN, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the UN, the moderator of this panel, has asked the following questions:

- 1- Would you say that the process of obtaining reparations is progressing as it should? Based on your experience and expertise, what are the real obstacles that need to be overcome to ensure fair and lasting reparations? What concrete recommendations would you make in this regard?***

We shall first enlist elements of the 2023 Accra Declarations that will guide our input, analyse them in an attempt to respond to the questions, indicate some progress and success stories, highlight the problems and obstacles perceived, shed some light on the Diaspora perspectives and actions, before offering our recommendations:

The Accra Declarations state, among others

- 3. We call for the adoption of a clear, comprehensive definition of reparations and for the formation of criteria for reparatory justice initiatives based on the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. An important goal is to distinguish reparations from equitable, inclusive, and ordinary public policy, as well as from the narrow Black nativist lineage proposition.***

6. We commit to supporting existing efforts for the return of artefacts, monuments, and human remains connected to our memory as African people.

8. Consistent with the call of CARICOM, we call upon the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent to call for a Global Summit of colonial powers/governments, financial institutions, corporations, and other institutions that propagated and benefited from enslavement to advance a process of truth, justice, and accountability.

10. We call for the United Nations to extend the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent by 10 Years.

11. We will engage in dialogue and discussion on the term **“Global African”** as an inclusive identity of Black people around the world. It is evident that across the globe, there is a direct lineage to Africa. We are all Africans wherever we land and wherever we reside.

12. We will address the urgent need for independent, self-sufficient knowledge systems and Black media/Communications platforms to propagate and spread knowledge to empower Global African movements.

## **I. Progress and Success stories**

1. In the spirit of *the 1993 Abuja Proclamation*, The 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)<sup>1</sup>, 2023 Accra Proclamation and Declaration on Reparations, which called for a united front for justice and reparations, including *"the exploration of legal and judicial options for reparations"*<sup>2</sup>, *the historic decision of the 38<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on the 16.02.2025 on qualification of slavery, deportation and colonization as crimes against humanity and genocide against the peoples of Africa*", *as well as the September 2025 Addis Ababa AU-CARICOM Summit* with the aim of strengthening integration and cooperation between the two regions, particularly in the context of seeking reparations for historical wrongs; we have witnessed in the past years an increasing collaborations and partnerships between the governments and Global African people of the African continent and their counterparts in the CARICOM region.

These are in line with the relevant resolution of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on reparations for Africans and people of African descent adopted in 2024<sup>3</sup> and the African Union's 2025 theme: *"Justice for people of African descent through reparations"*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paragraphs 98 to 106 of the DDPA

<https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/background/durban-declaration-and-programme-of-action>

<sup>2</sup> <https://au.int/fr/decisions/accra-proclamation-reparations>

<sup>3</sup> CADHP/Res.616 (LXXXI) 2024, November 14, 2024

<https://achpr.au.int/fr/adopted-resolutions/616-travers-des-consultations-sur-les-descendants-dafricains-lascendance-autoch>

They present concrete signs that Africans and People of African Descent are gradually but surely coming to terms with the fact that blood is thicker than water. We're progressively discovering and discarding the lies told in the past by the colonial powers, which sowed the seed of discord and suspicion among the Global African People. Both the Accra Summit and the recent Addis Ababa AU-CARICOM Summit were made possible through collaborative efforts of both regions, the Global Africa, signalling a deeper integration and cooperation.

2. The leadership demonstrated by Togo through the President of the Council of the Republic of Togo, H.E. Mr Faure Gnassingbé, in the movement of Pan-Africanism in general and Reparatory Justice in particular, and in consolidating on the past success, indicates that progress is being made steadily.

3. The appointment of Special Envoy for Reparatory Justice by the government of Ghana has cemented the direction of Reparatory Justice from an AU member state.

4. Prof Benedict Oramah, the outgoing president of Afreximbank, has strengthened economic ties between the AU and the CARICOM region through the institutionalisation of the annual AfriCaribbean Business Forum and other business instruments. Deals worth Billions of USD have been signed each year in these fora since 2022. This goes a long way to promote trust and confidence between the two regions for economic progress. His Successor, Dr George Elombi has indicated interest to consolidate and expand on the achievements so far. This also points towards a deeper integration and cooperation.

5. The efforts of governments, civil societies, and the private sectors have led to the general acceptance of the term **Global Africa** to include the peoples of the African continent, as well as the Afrodescendants as indicated in the Accra Proclamation on Reparations.

6. The requested extension by the 2023 Accra Declaration of the 2nd International Decade for People of African Descent (01.01.2025 - 31.12.2034) under the theme *Recognition, Justice and Development* has been accepted and adopted by the UN General Assembly. Under the theme of justice, and in recognition of the efforts made so far, the UN specifically mentioned **Reparatory Justice** as part of the mandate of the 2nd Decade.

7. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has just published its first draft of a **General Recommendation regarding reparations** for the transatlantic trade in Africans for chattel slavery and the ensuing and continuing harms inflicted on people of African descent.

8. The establishment of the African Diaspora as 6<sup>th</sup> Region of Africa is a commendable positive step in the right direction towards unity.

9. Diaspora action and activities have been intense and progressive, as will be discussed in part III of this input.

## II. Problems and Obstacles

1. It is still confusing as to the **definition and framework of Reparatory Justice**. We seem not to have a common understanding of what we request, the scope, and the modalities of reparations, and identify some low-hanging fruits to start from.
2. We have not yet fully identified **the real scientific content of the harm and damage** that we seek to repair. A clear identification and analysis of the harm and damage will go a long way toward helping us determine the forms, scope, and modalities of reparation. This is very necessary, especially if we may go through international litigation and judicial options.
3. Most of our people in Global Africa, both on the continent and in the Diaspora, **seem not to be well informed and ignorant of the movement of Reparatory Justice**. The CARICOM region appears to have made some advances in carrying its people along. We should undertake extensive publication and media coverage to advance our cause, including among our people. The African media mentioned by the Accra Declaration should do a bit more in this regard.
4. We seem to **lack the political will and motivation** to commence actions with some low-hanging fruits. It is still not so clear to us why some of our lawyers and barristers in Global Africa still wear warm wigs to court in our hot climate as done in the British cold weather! Also, our school curriculum is still very much oriented towards the colonial practices. We should summon the courage to decolonize our schools and learning system. The colonial masters cannot repair this. We must do it by ourselves.

## III. Diaspora Actions

The African Diaspora in Switzerland and the African Diaspora in general have identified some low-hanging fruits to embark on. Our philosophy is to engage constructively rather than resort to confrontational and destructive criticism. Our principal activities are resumed thus:

### 1. Africa in the Museum: Dialogue on African artefacts in Switzerland

Africa in the Museum is a project of the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The project aims to achieve reparatory justice for Africa and People of African Descent through restitution of African heritage in Swiss museums. The project focuses mainly on eight Swiss museums that are working to research and document the provenance of cultural artefacts looted from the Kingdom of Benin in Nigeria. The collaborative study with colleagues from Nigeria and Switzerland aims at identifying artefacts from the Benin Kingdom currently displayed or archived in the eight Swiss museums and others. The research shows that :

- 47% of the objects emanate from the colonial era
- 42% come from the British conquest of the Benin Kingdom in 1897
- 9% are from the post-colonial era
- 2% unknown era

This is the result of the research presented by the eight museums in the presence of Nigerian and Swiss authorities at the Rietberg Museum in Zurich on 2nd February 2023. The data above clearly shows that at least 89% of the artefacts are either directly looted or have a suspicious origin and are therefore objects of restitution. This is in line with the Accra Declaration, 6th schedule. The Nigerian government is now in negotiations with the Swiss government on the return of the artefacts.

Other artifacts from Cameroon, Rep. Dem. of Congo, Namibia, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Africa have also been identified.

## 2. Advocacy on Switzerland's colonial past, colonial monuments and symbols in the Swiss public spaces

The African Diaspora in Switzerland and other stakeholders have been active in advocacy against the exhibition of colonial monuments and symbols in Swiss public spaces. At the same time, there has been an intense public debate over the recognition of Switzerland's colonial past, despite not having directly possessed colonies.

Finally, Switzerland has publicly recognized its colonial past through an explicit exhibition "Colonialism" of Switzerland's colonial past at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich (13.09.2024 - 19.01.2025). The presence of a Swiss Federal Councillor graced the exhibition opening ceremony highlighting the political undertone of the event.

Following diverse advocacy initiatives by the African Diaspora, civil society groups, and politicians, the public space at the University of Neuchâtel, formally named after the known racist Swiss-American Louis Agassiz, was renamed in 2018 in honour of Ms Tilo Frey by the municipality of Neuchâtel.

The Swiss Cameroonian school teacher was the first elected person of African Descent to the Swiss National Parliament.

## 3. Dialogue with the Swiss police on racial profiling and violence against People of African Descent

A number of violent incidents against the People of African Descent within the police force have been reported in Switzerland. Some have even led to the death of Africans!

Through regular dialogue and training on diversity by the African Diaspora in the police force, some progress have been made, even though Africans and People of African Descent remain subject of racial profiling.

- ✓ Cases of pulling Africans naked in public spaces by the Swiss police have ceased
- ✓ Some cantons, like Vaud, have a dedicated hotline telephone number to report police abuses
- ✓ Some cantons have established migrants-authorities platforms to report and meet to discuss cases of abuses in the police force.
- ✓ We have recorded some cases of suspension of police officers for unethical, racist behaviours

#### 4. Checkmate the unethical activities of the Multinational organisations in Africa

The African Diaspora Council of Switzerland has continued to engage with Swiss-based Multinational companies accused of unethical and condescending activities in the African market. The engagement so far has been very constructive, showing some progress.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

1. There is an urgent need to embark on **scientific research on the notion and content of "harm" and "damages"** suffered by People of African Descent due to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Deportation, and Colonialism. The knowledge of the exact nature and scope of the harm and damages is essential to determine the nature, scope, and modalities of reparation. This is even more important in an international judicial litigation.

These studies can be conducted by the existing Ad-hoc committee or a sub-committee within the Ad-hoc committee with clear terms of reference and a time frame.

This will lead to the adoption of a clear, comprehensive definition of reparations and to the formulation of criteria and modalities for reparatory justice initiatives, grounded in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, as envisioned by the Accra Declaration.

The African Diaspora Council of Switzerland is capable and willing to participate in this exercise.

2. Develop an explicit (binding) **Roadmap to Reparatory Justice**, indicating the low-hanging fruits that member states, the Diaspora, and civil society, the private sector could embark on without further delay. Prominent in the Roadmap should include the Reform of our school curriculum to **redefine African cultural identity, decolonise our minds (Ngugi wa Thiong'o) and promote self-esteem.**

3. Develop a profound and extensive **communication and propaganda framework** aimed at marketing the movement and especially educating and informing the African citizens and People of African Descent on the importance and progress of Reparatory Justice.

It is advised that each member state should form **alliances with local and Diaspora media outfits to inform their population extensively**. This is not only useful to bring everybody on board and leave no one behind, but also deters some colonial negative advances that might sponsor propaganda of calumny against the movement. If the average citizen is not well informed, some imperialist tendencies may sponsor alternative coverage on the streets of the capital and big cities in Africa, showcasing people who are ignorant of the cause in order to malign our leaders, that Reparatory Justice is self-serving without enough backing from the citizenry!

4. We should also build a **strong lobbying framework** within the UN system and the international community at large.

5. Also, we must move from **Pain to Power, from victim to real economic players** leveraging our mineral and natural resources base.

Finally, as the famous African proverb goes: if you want to go fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go together. However, in the words of the former President Olusegun Obasonjo of Nigeria at the AfriCaribbean Business Forum in the Bahamas 2024, **it is time to go both fast and far!**

Thank you

Dozie Celeste UGOCHUKWU

African Diaspora Council of Switzerland