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High-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Note by the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to circulate, pursuant to resolution 75/320 of 2 September 2021, the present compilation document of the statements delivered by Heads of State or other dignitaries by means of pre-recorded statements during the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and submitted to the President no later than the day on which the pre-recorded statement is played in the Assembly Hall.

The statements contained in the present document were delivered on the morning of Wednesday, 22 September 2021, at the 5th meeting of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.5).

In accordance resolution 75/320, and without setting a precedent for mandated high-level meetings planned for future high-level weeks, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.



United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see also A/76/PV.5, annex I)**Address by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet**

Delivered on Wednesday, 22 September 2021, at the 5th meeting of the General Assembly

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Twenty years ago the international community met in Durban, South Africa to address racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Eliminating these violations of human dignity, equality and rights was very clearly a matter of the greatest urgency.

But two decades on, the inequalities and suffering they generate for Africans and people of African descent; Asians and people of Asian descent; members of ethnic and religious minorities — including victims of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism; indigenous peoples and migrants continue to hold back all our societies, and harm both sustainable development and social cohesion.

It is vital that we rise above past controversies and come together to combat racism and related discrimination in the world today.

Excellencies,

We have taken steps that have laid a strong foundation for real change.

The proclamation by this Assembly of the International Decade for People of African Descent; establishment of a new expert mechanism to advance racial justice in law enforcement, and operationalization of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent further strengthen our global anti-racism architecture.

In July, following our comprehensive report on racial discrimination including in law enforcement, I put forward a four-point Agenda Towards Transformative Change for Racial Justice and Equality that I believe sets out building blocks for tangible and sustainable progress.

But millions of people continue to bear the burden of past and contemporary forms of racism and exclusion, including historical denial of their humanity; the legacy of colonial exploitation; and the inhuman and criminal enslavement of generations of women, men and children of African descent.

It is important to address these lasting consequences, including through appropriate forms of reparations.

Reparations should be broad-based, and need to include measures aimed at restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. These may include formal acknowledgment and apologies, memorialization and institutional and educational reforms. For reparations to be effective, all these elements are needed.

We should be clear though that these efforts must go beyond symbolism, and that they do require political, human and financial capital. Such costs should be seen alongside the enrichment of many economies through enslavement and

exploitation — and recognition of this reality should encourage genuine consideration of substantive reparations.

As the DDPA recognizes, there is also a need to strengthen and enhance international cooperation to increase equality of opportunities for trade, economic growth and sustainable development.

To recognize the past and truly leave no one behind in future, it is essential to promote equality not only within, but also among countries — transforming our world towards social, economic and environmental sustainability, and I would encourage greater international engagement on these issues of reparatory justice.

Excellencies,

We are at an important juncture to take the anti-racism agenda forward.

To effectively tackle racial discrimination and the inequality experienced by people of African descent requires a comprehensive approach — as set out by the DDPA and developed in my own Agenda for Transformative Change — with concrete strategies and actionable, time-bound targets.

It will also be important to address the multiple and intersectional manifestations of racial discrimination. A woman who is a migrant, who is a person of African descent, and who is poor starkly faces multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination — and this recognition of the DDPA of the realities of such multiple discrimination must be integrated into laws and policies to address and repair the inequality and racism faced by such victims, including by integrating a gender perspective.

My Office will continue to support domestic action and international cooperation to eliminate racial discrimination and achieve racial justice, including in coordinating the International Decade for people of African Descent.

But the anti-discrimination agenda concerns and belongs to all of us, irrespective of race, colour, descent, ethnic or national origin, affiliation, religion or belief. Stronger efforts must be employed by all stakeholders to implement the goals laid out at Durban.

I pay tribute in particular to the courage and resilience of civil society organizations combatting racism around the world. Today's mobilisation of activism brings further promise that racial justice can be achieved, for people of African descent and all others suffering racial discrimination.

Thank you.

South Africa (see also A/76/PV.5, annex II)**Address by Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa**

Delivered on Wednesday, 22 September 2021, at the 5th meeting of the General Assembly

President of the General Assembly, Mr Abdulla Shahid,

Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr António Guterres,

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet,
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is 20 years since the world adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

And it is 25 years since the people of South Africa adopted a democratic Constitution.

In that Constitution, we affirmed that as South Africans we are called upon to build a society based on social justice and fundamental human rights, with a view of correcting the injustices of our past.

These words ring true for all the injustices that have been committed against many peoples around the world.

Slavery was one of the darkest periods in the history of humankind and a crime of unparalleled barbarity.

Its legacy persists in the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and in Africa itself.

Millions of the descendants of Africans who were sold into slavery remain trapped in lives of underdevelopment, disadvantage, discrimination and poverty.

South Africa calls on the United Nations to put the issue of reparations for victims of the slave trade on its agenda.

We support the adoption of special measures, including affirmative action programmes and targeted financial assistance, as restitution to communities whose ancestors were sold into slavery.

We further support all measures being undertaken to address the historic and contemporary discrimination against people of African descent.

This includes increasing representation of people of African descent in global institutions and in positions of leadership.

As we strive to correct the wrongs of the past, we must combat the racism, sexism and national chauvinism of the present.

Racism directed at ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, the LGBTIQ+ community and other marginalised groups has led to the denial of opportunity, to institutionalised discrimination, and to violence.

Twenty years ago at the World Conference against Racism, we committed to an anti-discrimination agenda that would bring new hope and change to the lives of millions.

Just as we stand united to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, must recommit ourselves to implement the Durban Declaration and Platform for Action.

We must pursue this objective with energy and goodwill.

Ending racism is a fight in which each of us has a stake.

Let us all allow humanism to be our guide and solidarity be our strongest force.

We are called upon by history to redouble our efforts to build a world free of racism, to right the wrongs of the past and to restore the human dignity of all.

I thank you.

Civil society speaker (see also A/76/PV.5, annex III)**Address by civil society speaker Barryl A. Biekman**

Delivered on Wednesday, 22 September 2021, at the 5th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished guest

Greetings,

I feel much honoured to have been selected to deliver the keynote address on behalf of civil society when the United Nations and all people committed to the elimination of racism are proudly commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the landmark Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. For me personally it was one of the greatest events in my life to be part of the adoption 20 years ago of the DDPA in Durban in a spirit of solidarity and which gave voice to and protected the rights of all victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms.

People of African descent no doubt treasure the DDPA most as our ordeal was recognized as the first victims group and the transatlantic slave trade and slavery was recognized as a crime against humanity.

The DDPA is a peoples document based on a thorough preparatory process and broad participation in the preparatory committee meetings. The twentieth anniversary of its adoption indeed deserve to be com-memorated.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the civil society friends from international NGOs in particular those members of the Global Pan African Coalition on Durban plus 20 including the December 12th movement who campaigned for the decision to be taken to hold the third World Conference Against racism.

Mr President, My heart Cries,

And I would like to demonstrate this by using the expression “Truth has the inherent power to produce the promised effect”. This is to emphasize that we can only be successful in the fight against all forms of multiple racism if we do what we have promised. To defend and promote the fully implementation of the DDPA which is the strongest universal document of the United Nations’ programs to realize the rights of all victims of racism in intersectional perspective including Afrophobia, racial discrimination, and reparatory, restorative and climate justice.

Because of the structurally persistent negative campaign to defame and undermine the DDPA and its implementation as the DDPA in no way shows that it proclaims racism in particular anti-Semitism. This structural undermining of the DDPA is a blow in the face of all those who campaigned for the holding of the 3rd World Conference against Racism (WCAR) by ensuring the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action through a broad-based democratic process. Without the DDPA we would not have been as close as we are today in having a global platform positioned to recognize the unfulfilled rights of Africans and People of African Descent at the United Nations and global society. But our position is crystal clear, we will not accept any denial of the DDPA in the name of People of African Descent neither shall we settle for anything less than our birth right and our human rights.

Mr. President

While we are assembling to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of a great UN Programme we cannot be silent on the undermining and defamation of the DDPA that has taken place during the past 20 years and now escalated to the extreme.

We wonder why no senior official of the United Nations has stood up and spoken out against the disinformation and false propaganda against the DDPA that has preceded the anniversary and now caused the absence of different countries, including mine, from the commemoration.

We wonder how many lives could have been saved if the UN General Assembly resolutions on DDPA information and outreach programme had been implemented and the DDPA been known in its content to people everywhere.

Mr. President,

I close by saying that my is crying but my heart is smiling too.

Because of the importance of paragraph 1. of the Political Declaration whereby the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference, adopted in 2009, as well as the Political Declaration of the tenth years anniversary of its adoption, has been reaffirmed.

We do think however that a special paragraph should be devoted to 'Reparations' as it is already mentioned in the DDPA.

The very heart, soul, spirit and the essence of the WCAR and the DDPA is the demand for Reparations. Reparations is a very simply payment for a debt that is owed for crimes against humanity which were committed and, in various degrees and forms, have continued into the 21st century.

The DDPA embodies the demand of the masses of African people past and present.

20 years after Durban we will continue to fight. The DDPA will not be disappeared. Reparations will be received. As we said in 2001:

THEY STOLE US! THEY SOLD US! THEY OWE US! REPA-RATIONS NOW.!

I thank you for your attention
