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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

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

Agenda item 72

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

(b) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Draft resolution (A/76/L.2)

The President: I declare open the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. This meeting is being held in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 75/237 of 31 December 2020 and 75/320 of 2 September 2021, and is taking place under sub-item (b) of agenda item 72, entitled “Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action”.

I warmly welcome everyone to our high-level meeting, which will focus on the theme of reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent. The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/76/L.2. Before proceeding further, I would like to remind members that in accordance with resolution 75/320, action on

the draft political declaration will be taken following the opening statements. I will now deliver my opening statement from the rostrum.

I thank Member States for the opportunity to address them at this commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Portugal and South Africa on their successful leadership of the consultations on the political declaration to be adopted today.

The adoption in 2001 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action carried with it an emphasis on tackling racial discrimination and intolerance. Sadly, two decades later, we are still working to see that doctrine fulfilled. That is not to say that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action has failed, but rather that we have not done enough. As a global community, we have not done enough to tackle the pervasiveness of racism, racial discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia. Tackling racism in all its forms is a moral responsibility for justice. Racism begets violence, displacement and inequity. It lives on because we allow it to. It penetrates society because we fail to acknowledge diversity.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is a comprehensive toolkit for addressing racism. It makes reference to various groups of people, such as Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, indigenous peoples, minorities, youth, women and children. Today’s chosen theme of reparations, racial justice and equality for people of

In accordance with decision 75/573, 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.



African descent is very timely. It serves as a reminder that in our efforts to recover from the pandemic, there is a great need to acknowledge the past and address the ingrained racism in our societies.

My presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session will include five rays of hope, one of them specifically focused on human rights and on addressing racism in all its forms. As the United Nations — with human rights as a founding pillar of the Organization — we must never lose sight of that core principle. It must permeate everything we do.

Like so much else, the global pandemic has exacerbated underlying conditions and exposed fault lines. The same holds true for racism. We saw, and still see, the marginalized and vulnerable fall further behind. Many have been denied equal access to health, education and security. Those pre-existing structural weaknesses were a recipe for disaster long before the coronavirus disease. The pandemic has only made the divide and injustice starker. There are many lessons we can take from the pandemic, from seeing who has been affected and how. Let us be self-aware enough to recognize those failings and seek racial equality, to close that divide and build the resilience of those whom we have sadly left behind. As we do so, we must ensure that African descendants are adequately represented in decision-making and policymaking processes. For their rights to be meaningfully reflected and translated into doable policies, they must be part of the conversation. As I stated at the opening of the general debate (see A/76/PV.3), this moment in time is a turning point. Let us turn the tide on racism and intolerance. We must leave no one behind.

In closing, I want to reiterate the importance of acknowledging the past. Whether in the form of a formal apology or through other means, we must own up to and acknowledge what has happened. We cannot move past what is not addressed. I encourage the international community, individuals, leaders and stakeholders to engage in deeper and more honest dialogue to address this global issue.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: At the dawn of this century, world leaders and human rights advocates journeyed to Durban determined to banish the hatred and prejudice that had disfigured previous centuries, to make this — in the words of the original Durban

Declaration and Programme of Action — a century of human rights, and to eradicate racism in all its abhorrent forms and manifestations. That journey for equality and justice did not begin in Durban. The path was paved by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and followed in the footsteps of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Today, two decades on, our journey continues. The twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action offers an important opportunity to reflect on where we stand and where we need to go. Racism and racial discrimination still permeate institutions, social structures and everyday life in every society. Structural racism and systematic injustice still deny people their fundamental human rights. Africans and people of African descent, minority communities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, displaced persons and so many others all continue to confront hatred, stigmatization, scapegoating, discrimination and violence. Xenophobia, misogyny, hateful conspiracies, white supremacy and neo-Nazi ideologies are spreading, amplified in echo chambers of hate. From glaring infringements to creeping transgressions, human rights are under assault. Racism is often the cruel catalyst.

The links between racism and gender inequality are unmistakable, and we see some of the worst effects in the overlap and intersections of discrimination suffered by women from radicalized communities and minority groups. We are witnessing a troubling rise in anti-Semitism, a harbinger throughout history of discrimination against others. We must condemn without hesitation or reservation the racism and discrimination of growing anti-Muslim bigotry, the mistreatment of minority Christians and other forms of intolerance around the world. Let me be clear. Whoever uses this process — or any other platform — for anti-Semitic diatribes, anti-Muslim discourse, hateful speech or baseless assertions only denigrates our essential fight against racism.

(spoke in French)

In today's global landscape a glimmer of hope has appeared on the horizon. A movement for racial justice and equality has emerged with unprecedented force, reach and impact. That new awareness, often led by women and young people, has created a momentum that we must seize. The Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights has launched a transformative agenda to help end systemic racism, ensure accountability and deliver reparative justice. The Human Rights Council has established a new independent mechanism aimed at advancing racial justice and equality in law enforcement. The Permanent Forum of People of African Descent, created by the General Assembly, is another example of meaningful progress towards a systemic response to systemic racism. I call on every Member State to take concrete actions, including through policy measures, legislation and more granular data collection, in support of all these efforts at the national and global levels. Together we must recognize the crimes of the past that continue to resonate and haunt our present — the lingering traumas, the suffering across generations, the structural inequalities so deeply rooted in centuries of enslavement and colonial exploitation. We must reverse the consequences of generations of exclusion and discrimination, including their obvious social and economic dimensions, through reparative justice frameworks.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is damning proof of just how far we still are from righting past wrongs. In some cases, mortality rates have been three times higher for marginalized groups. Women from minority groups have often been the worst off, facing escalations in gender-based violence, losing jobs and educational opportunities in greater numbers than anyone else and benefiting the least from fiscal stimulus.

(spoke in English)

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was meant to break the vicious cycle in which discrimination leads to deprivation and poverty deepens discrimination. We can overcome those harmful afflictions and heal if we recognize diversity as richness and if we understand, as Durban did, that the fight against racism is both a global, universal effort and a concrete struggle in every society. No country can claim to be free from it. We can overcome those harmful afflictions and heal if we act to redress the global political, economic, and structural power imbalances rooted in colonial rule, enslavement and exploitation that continue to blight our present; if we work to ensure that all of us feel respected in our individual identities while feeling valued as members of society as a whole; if we make sure that all of us — regardless of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, gender,

religion, sexual orientation or other status — can live lives of dignity and opportunity; if, and only if, we stand together as one human family, rich in diversity, equal in dignity and rights and united in solidarity. At a time when we feel more divided than ever, let us unite around our common humanity. Let us remember what Nelson Mandela said: no one is born a racist. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, he went on to say, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Let us heed his hopeful words today and recommit to that essential purpose.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. We will now hear other speakers for the opening plenary meeting, in accordance with resolution 75/320.

The Assembly will first hear a pre-recorded statement by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/335).

The President: I now invite the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa to introduce a statement by her Head of State.

Mrs. Pandor (South Africa): I am pleased to introduce a statement by President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa on this very important occasion.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/335).

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his participation and would like to inform members that he has to leave at this time for other engagements.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States and the Caribbean Community.

President Tshisekedi Tshilombo *(spoke in French)*: I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States and the Caribbean Community (AfCAR), on the subject of reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent.

I would first of all like to take this opportunity to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level plenary meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We welcome the theme of this high-level event because it focuses our attention on issues of common interest to Africans, including Africans of the diaspora. It summarizes our urgent need and our shared aspiration to achieve a just, free and equitable society that defines our common humanity.

We acknowledge that some progress has been made in the 20 years since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, but we have many more obstacles to overcome, because Africans in general, and Africans of the diaspora in particular, are still dealing with the problems created by inequalities. We have noted the alarming increase in racial discrimination around the world. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated that further. We know that the pandemic has upended lives and livelihoods around the world. We find ourselves in a situation where some countries have more than enough vaccines while other countries like ours, and the least developed countries and small island developing States in particular, have access to only minimal quantities of COVID-19 vaccines and other medical supplies. That is clearly not a demonstration of equality among the countries and peoples of this world. We need real effort if we are to ensure the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Nonetheless, we reaffirm our support for the Declaration every year on 21 March, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and 31 August, the International Day for People of African Descent. We are pleased to note that the International Day for People of African Descent was celebrated for the first time this year, during the Assembly's seventy-fifth session. Such events demonstrate the global commitment to eliminating racism and recognize the immense contributions made by people of African descent.

More than five years have passed since the international community agreed to implement the International Decade for People of African Descent. We are aware of the racial prejudices and discrimination that people of African descent continue to face today and take due note of the way that the international community deals with such issues. However, we are

pleased with the Governments and Member States that since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action 20 years ago have implemented progressive legislative and administrative measures designed to effectively combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Even more important and worthy of commendation are all who appreciate and respect the knowledge and contributions that people of African descent bring to their societies, whether in the economy, politics, culture, education, medicine, innovation, entrepreneurship or elsewhere.

We would like to express our gratitude to Member States for the Assembly's adoption by consensus on 2 August of resolution 75/314, on the establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent. AfCAR welcomes the creation of the Forum, which will serve both as a consultative mechanism and a platform for improving the security, quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent. We see it as a demonstration of Member States' cooperation in and commitment to a healing process for people of African descent. We believe firmly that the Forum will have a significant impact on the quest to bring an end to race-related iniquities and injustices. We also reaffirm the International Decade for People of African Descent, which was implemented in 2015 based on the themes of recognition, justice and development and which will end in 2024. AfCAR believes that all of these efforts and commitments are unique and timely opportunities to emphasize the important contributions made by people of African descent to their societies and to propose tangible measures to promote equality and combat discrimination in every form.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all — human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination and respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity, all of which are central to the pursuit of these Goals. The African Group and the Caribbean Community believe that empowering individuals and ensuring inclusion and equality in all walks of life are obligations for us all, required by our shared humanity. We affirm that the right of all citizens to a good-quality education helps contribute to more inclusive societies and greater equity, including harmonious relations between nations and individuals, and can help promote mutual understanding and

respect for cultural diversity and human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action also affirms the promotion of the complete and accurate inclusion of the history and contribution of people of African descent in educational curricula, among other things.

AfCAR is of the view that the responsibility to effectively combat acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a duty of States. We affirm that whenever such acts occur they must be firmly condemned and stopped from happening again, and we urge everyone, including Member States, to take preventive steps in that regard, including through legislative and administrative measures. We therefore welcome the adoption of legislative measures and the implementation of specialized mechanisms to combat racism and all forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and we recognize the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, strategies and programmes aimed at combating all forms of discrimination.

AfCAR calls on Governments to strengthen protections against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance by ensuring that all people have access to effective and appropriate recourse, and at the same time have the right to turn to competent national courts and other just and appropriate national institutions to request reparations and satisfaction for all damages resulting from such discrimination.

The African Group supports the countries of the Caribbean Community in their calls for reparative justice. We believe that reparations for slavery and colonialism should encompass not just responsibility for historic wrongs but also the eradication of the scars of racial inequality, subordination and discrimination that were built under slavery, apartheid and colonialism, as well as debt cancellation. Furthermore, as long as legacies of slavery and colonialism such as poverty and inequitable access to education, housing and justice persist, the call for reparative justice will remain one of the most critical priorities that people of African descent have. The African Group and the Caribbean Community firmly believe that sustainable development, together with respect for and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, as well as the implementation of international obligations and commitments in the area of human rights in accordance with international human rights law, are essential to the prevention of acts of racism, racial discrimination,

xenophobia and related intolerance. In that respect, AfCAR welcomes the creation of a new independent expert mechanism within the Human Rights Council. We look forward to seeing the transformative nature of this mechanism, particularly in the areas of racial justice and equality in the context of the application of laws at the global level.

In conclusion, we reaffirm the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and we approve all efforts devoted to promoting respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent in particular. We believe it is time for all the instruments that have been adopted to be implemented with dignity, respect and recognition in accordance with the priorities that have been agreed with people of African descent around the world. Their voices must be included on all questions that affect them and their lives so that no one is left behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia): On behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, let me begin by expressing my gratitude to the co-facilitators and experts who have debated and discussed the scope, modalities, format and organization of this high-level meeting, as well as the draft political declaration (A/76/L.2) that will be the event's final product. I am certain that the text we will adopt is balanced and reflects our shared concerns in the areas of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The international community is gathered here today to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and to adopt this year's text by consensus. We have agreed on a document that reflects the common and unwavering interest of the world's nations, Governments and organizations in a comprehensive text that proposes concrete measures to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

This year's draft declaration, which is a continuation of the Declaration adopted 20 years ago in South Africa at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, represents a strong commitment by the international community to addressing racism, racial

discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It acknowledges that racism remains a global concern, that its eradication requires redoubled international efforts, and that despite the global community's efforts over the past two decades, people continue to suffer from various forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

Today we are gathered here to draw the world's attention to the goals of this meeting and to re-energize the political commitment to achieving those goals. It confirms our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also emphasizes the significance and value of indigenous peoples' contributions to the global political, economic, social and cultural development of our societies, as well as highlighting the challenges they face and their efforts to draw international attention to the tragedies that have left the developing world behind.

Today we recognize the importance of achieving justice and equal opportunities for all people, as well as ensuring their enjoyment of their universal and indivisible rights, including the right to development and to self-determination and the right to live in peace and freedom. This is the path to eradicating the world of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance. As we have always done, we reaffirm our belief in the importance of spreading a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, highlighting tolerance and respect for diversity. We want to emphasize the importance of finding common ground in order to address the challenges facing humanity that threaten universal human rights, and of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through global cooperation, partnership and inclusion.

In conclusion, we proclaim as a top priority for our various nations our strong commitment and determination in the fight against every kind and form of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as in the protection of their victims.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

First of all, let me express our deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action under the theme of reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent.

Twenty years ago, the international community took a stand with a view to eliminating the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Today we are taking stock of the progress that has been made in achieving the goals and objectives set forth in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Our member States have sought to protect the diverse and multicultural nature of their societies through the adoption of legislation, national plans and policies aimed at ensuring the protection of people dealing with multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, as well as minorities and groups in vulnerable situations, together with the creation of national mechanisms that combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

At the multilateral level, the General Assembly recently decided through its resolution 75/314 to establish the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent as a platform for improving the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent, and in recognition that people of African descent have for centuries been victims of racism, racial discrimination and enslavement and have been denied many of their rights. The States of the Latin American and Caribbean region have been supportive of those and many other related initiatives, and we have participated actively in the work of promoting the goals and objectives of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. However, while we acknowledge the progress that has been made, we also realize that much more must be done, especially where the benefit of indigenous peoples and people of African descent is concerned, and that we need enhanced international cooperation in promoting and protecting human rights and achieving the goals of the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. To that end, we are hopeful that this high-level meeting will serve as a catalyst for united action to achieve our objectives and elevate racism as a global concern.

The GRULAC member States condemn in the strongest terms the ongoing resurgence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in

many regions of the world, which are serious obstacles to people's full enjoyment of all human rights and represent a denial of the self-evident truth that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The member States of GRULAC remain committed to taking concrete action to prevent and condemn such phenomena. We remain convinced that intercultural dialogue, tolerance, education and respect for diversity are useful approaches for the international community to combat these scourges. It is vital to address their root causes and to take a broad range of preventive and corrective measures to prevent, address and eliminate acts of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance everywhere. Many of the countries of our region are made up of multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual populations, and composed of a mosaic of people who represent migrants with ethnic origins from all over the planet. We acknowledge that the diversity of our peoples is our strength. Our societies benefit from the richness of that diversity. We recognize that encouraging the full participation and contribution of all our peoples is of vital importance and that sustainable development cannot be achieved unless it is achieved for all.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is one of the greatest global challenges in the history of the United Nations, and it makes the prospect of achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals more difficult. We need to tackle health inequities and inequalities within and between countries through political commitment, policies and international cooperation, and to counter the rise in discrimination, hate speech, stigmatization, racism and xenophobia related to the pandemic as an important part of our COVID-19 response.

We also call on Member States to uphold human dignity and equality for the victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism, in particular people of African descent in the African diaspora; to draw lessons from manifestations and past experiences of racism everywhere in the world with a view to preventing their recurrence; and to address and promote greater levels of social inclusion, which is essential if we are to reduce racial discrimination and intolerance.

In conclusion, the member States of GRULAC reaffirm the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the 2009 Durban Review Conference, as well as our commitment to its full and effective implementation. We believe firmly that

the Durban process can result in the eradication of all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and related intolerance, thereby enabling people everywhere to experience the full enjoyment of their fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The President: I now introduce a pre-recorded statement by Ms. Barryl Biekman, Coordinator of the Monitoring Working Group on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and People of African Descent at Tiye International and Chair of the African European Women's Movement Sophiedela.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/335).

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by Ms. Catherine Labiran, founder of the Praxis Project.

Ms. Labiran: (Praxis Project): I will not spend too much time here talking about structural racism and what it has done and continues to do to Black lives. I believe that everyone here knows. I do not need to attempt the impossible task of listing the names of the lives lost to police brutality. I do not need to explain what the pandemic has done to Black and brown communities. I do not need to detail what happens when a human is placed in a cage, whether it is a jail, a prison or a detention centre. I do not need to point out what happens when people do not have access to clean water, clean air, nutritious food or transportation. Anyone who belongs to the communities affected by such atrocities has felt it. It is a haunting that sits in the subconscious and strikes when one hears sirens, when loved ones cannot access care at a doctor's office, when one has to navigate the oxymoronic situation of being targeted while simultaneously being made invisible. And as we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, we would be remiss if we did not express outrage at the violence being inflicted on Haitian asylum seekers at the United States border.

It is exhausting to speak about racism because none of those issues are new. They are ancient, which lets me know that the exhaustion that I feel is not only mine, it is ancestral. So today, for my sake and perhaps for the sake of some here, I want to talk about blackness and how intimately it is linked to ingenuity and to care. I want to talk about blackness beyond the body. I want to talk about mind and spirit and all the parts of ourselves

that become neglected when we are referred to solely as Black bodies. I want to uplift the work of National Bail Out, a collective that bails out Black mothers and caregivers from jails and detention centres and provides them with the resources and care that they deserve. I want us to reflect on how bailing someone out does not just transform the life of that individual but has the potential to radically change the reality of a family and a community. We saw the same impact of bail-outs last year, during the uprisings and the immediate response from our communities to help get freedom fighters free. We saw similar actions in Ferguson and in the local and global response from activists who shared tips and who came and travelled from Palestine. We saw similar actions with the Lekki toll gate and the End SARS movement and the widespread response from the diaspora. There is no institution, Government, foundation or corporation that can take credit for the revolutions that we have seen. We must look to our own hands.

I want to uplift the work of Black parents, siblings, aunties, uncles, cousins and grandparents and how they have to re-educate young people in their families because of the misinformation that is shared in schools, how they work to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, how they have to affirm that Black hair and Black skin are beautiful and that Black children deserve space to play, laugh and simply be children. I want to centre Black trans women who are marginalized, discriminated against and murdered because of transphobia. I want to acknowledge Black trans women who are leading movements and are on the front lines of protests, and I also want to acknowledge them when they rightly refuse to be made martyrs. I want to acknowledge Black trans women beyond issues of oppression, for being trendsetters, influencers and pushing forward Black culture, despite having their words, phrases and dances co-opted. I want to ground us in the reality that liberation is not possible without their freedom, and that efforts that are not intersectional are innately ineffective.

I want to acknowledge people who created, supported and expanded mutual aid networks in the face of the pandemic. I want to acknowledge how communities did not just sit with the knowledge that Black and brown communities were being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, but instead rose to the challenge and helped to distribute groceries, personal protective equipment and other essentials that enabled

Black and brown communities to stay afloat. I want to acknowledge how they have continued to organize and ensure that restaurants stay open, that sex workers are supported, that resources are circulated to immigrant communities, elders, people who are incarcerated and people who were once behind bars. It is important to note how these mutual aid networks functioned as an avenue for relationship and community-building between neighbours at a time when we had no choice but to distance ourselves from one another.

I want to acknowledge the works of Black creatives, people who use their mediums to archive Black stories and allow us to explore fictional realities of what could be and the artists who lead us into Black futures and the world that will exist once our liberation is actualized. It is through these creative efforts that many of us have been able to think about racism beyond our experiences and explore the actions that historically have been taken to enable us to arrive at this present day. I want to acknowledge how art heals, transforms and reminds us that while we are individuals, we are also a collective and that music and movement have always gone hand in hand.

I want to acknowledge Black therapists, body workers and healers who help us cope and heal from the stresses of racism. I want to acknowledge how they affirm our wellness and survival and how they use indigenous practices to show us that Black people have always been here and always will be. So while it is important to reflect on what we could be doing, it is essential that we reflect on all that is being done to combat racism and its consequences. Those reflections are important because they allow us to understand that rather than try to invent new solutions, we simply need to resource the visions of people who are already organizing and advocating for justice. We need to stop treating conversations about reparations as if they are far-fetched and instead lean into the fact that we can make them tangible. Institutions such as the United Nations must address their own structural racism and be held accountable for it. There needs to be deep self-awareness, acknowledgement and action, and the labour of it should not fall on Black women, trans or non-binary people.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for the opening plenary of the high-level meeting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/76/L.2, entitled “United against

racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.2?

Draft resolution A/76/L.2 was adopted (resolution 76/1).

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica to speak in explanation of position after adoption.

Ms. Smith (Jamaica): I have the honour to deliver this statement in explanation of position on behalf of the Government of Jamaica. We thank the co-facilitators, South Africa and Portugal, and their teams for their efforts in the negotiation process to achieve consensus on the political declaration to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (resolution 76/1). We would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Ms. Ahlem Charikhi, of the Permanent Mission of Algeria, the coordinator for the Group of 77 and China, for her hard work and able negotiation skills and for duly representing the Group throughout the intergovernmental consultations on the political declaration for this high-level event, playing a key role in its adoption.

We have seen that today’s discourse centred on the issues of reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent, the theme of this political statement, which all countries of goodwill should support and embrace. However, as was noted in the co-facilitators’ explanatory letter, silence was broken on the final draft of the political declaration due to the lack of any reference to the issue of reparations in operative paragraph 5 of the text. In that regard, we want to recall paragraph 100 of the Durban Declaration, adopted in 2001, which notes that

“some States have taken the initiative to apologize and have paid reparation, where appropriate, for grave and massive violations committed”.

We also want to recall paragraph 101, which calls on those who have not yet contributed to restoring the dignity of victims of slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade, apartheid, genocide and past tragedies to find appropriate ways to do so.

The Government of Jamaica has consistently pursued reparative justice for those victims and their

descendants for the injustices, pain, suffering and loss of life endured during centuries of enslavement and the legacies of structural underdevelopment that our people have faced since emancipation. Our actions complement the mandate given to the Reparations Commission of the Caribbean Community to prepare the case for the region’s indigenous and African-descendant communities, who are victims of crimes against humanity in the forms of genocide, slavery, slave trading and racial apartheid.

Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People’s Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in human history. The lives of millions of men, women and children were destroyed in search of profit. There is an overwhelming moral and socioeconomic imperative for those victims and their descendants to have a right to reparative justice. It is for that reason that the delegation of Jamaica, while joining in the commemoration of this milestone to mark global progress towards ending racial discrimination and inequality, remains disappointed at the omission in the political declaration of a call to all the relevant States that have not already done so to dispense reparative justice, contributing to the development and recognition of the dignity of the States affected and their peoples.

Jamaica remains committed to the universal recognition of the imperative for reparative justice, and with the continued support of nations of goodwill will continue to call in the General Assembly for that duty to be internationally recognized as a necessary path to healing and the restoration of dignity and progress for people of African descent.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position after the adoption of resolution 76/1.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Ms. Mathu Joyini and Mr. Francisco Duarte Lopes, the Permanent Representatives of South Africa and Portugal to the United Nations, who ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations in the informal consultations on the draft of the political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. I am sure members of the Assembly join me in expressing our sincere appreciation to them.

As members are aware, pursuant to resolution 75/320, this high-level meeting consists of two consecutive round tables and a closing plenary meeting. Round tables 1 and 2 will take place this morning at 11 o'clock and this afternoon at 3 o'clock, respectively, in the combined conference rooms 1, 2 and 3. The closing plenary meeting will take place at 6 p.m. in this Hall.

Regarding the Chairs of the two round tables, as mentioned in a letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 21 September 2021, the President has proposed that Her Excellency Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, be appointed to chair round table 1, and His Excellency Mr. Pacôme Moubelet Boubeya, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, be appointed to chair round table 2.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, recalling its resolution 75/320, to appoint Her Excellency Mrs. Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, as the Chair of round table 1, and His Excellency Mr. Pacôme Moubelet Boubeya, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, as the Chair of round table 2?

It was so decided (decision 76/508).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 72.

Members are reminded that the 6th plenary meeting, continuing the general debate, will take place at 11 a.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 10.25 p.m.

Annex I

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

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.

Annex II

Address by Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa

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 LGBTQI+ 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.

Annex III

Address by Ms. Barryl A. Biekman, civil society speaker

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
