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Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

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Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity

The General Assembly,

Recalling the aims, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ which proclaimed that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms,

Reaffirming also the principles of equality and non-discrimination in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Underscoring that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights² reaffirms the prohibition of slavery and the slave trade, and that both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights³ reaffirm that recognition of the inherent dignity and of

* Any changes to the list of sponsors will be reflected in the official record of the meeting.

¹ Resolution 217 A (III).

² See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

³ Ibid.



the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,⁴ which states that all human beings are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law against any discrimination and against any incitement to discrimination,

Reaffirming the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action,⁵ which acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, further acknowledging that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade, and welcoming the twenty-fifth anniversary in 2026 of the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action,

Underlining its resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013, by which it proclaimed the first International Decade for People of African Descent and reiterated that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of their societies, and that any doctrine of racial superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous and must be rejected, together with theories that attempt to determine the existence of separate human races, and welcoming the proclamation of the period 2025–2034 as the Second International Decade for People of African Descent,

Recalling the commitment, set out in its Declaration on Future Generations,⁶ to eliminate all forms of persistent historical and structural inequalities, including by acknowledging, addressing and taking effective measures to remedy past tragedies and their consequences, and eradicate all forms of discrimination,

Recalling also its resolutions 2142 (XXI) of 26 October 1966, in which it proclaimed 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 61/19 of 28 November 2006, in which it designated 25 March 2007 as the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 62/122 of 17 December 2007, in which it designated 25 March as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 75/170 of 16 December 2020, in which it proclaimed 31 August as the International Day for People of African Descent, 78/323 of 13 August 2024, in which it proclaimed 25 July as the International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent and recognized their significant contribution to the development of societies and the importance of ensuring their full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of life, and 80/106 of 5 December 2025, in which it proclaimed 14 December as the International Day against Colonialism in All Its Forms and Manifestations, recognizing how little is known about the 500-year-long period of colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade and its lasting consequences, felt throughout the world, and condemning in the strongest terms the crimes committed during the colonial era,

Recognizing how little is known about the 400-year-long transatlantic slave trade and its lasting consequences, felt throughout the world, and welcoming the importance of continuing education and awareness-raising and the increased attention that the General Assembly commemoration has brought to the issue, including the raising of its profile in many States,

⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 660, No. 9464.

⁵ See A/CONF.189/12 and A/CONF.189/12/Corr.1, chap. I.

⁶ Resolution 79/1, annex II.

Recalling the erection of the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, the *Ark of Return*, at United Nations Headquarters,

Recognizing the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the establishment of the Routes of Enslaved Peoples programme, and of various United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent,

Taking note of the commemoration in 2024 of the thirtieth anniversary of the Routes of Enslaved Peoples programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the launch of its Network of Places of History and Memory linked to Enslavement and the Slave Trade and the first Dialogue for Reparatory Justice,

Taking note also of the initiatives taken by relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and anti-racism human rights mechanisms calling for effective remedies and reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent,

Taking note further of the Organization of African Unity Abuja Proclamation on Reparations for African Enslavement, Colonization and Neo-Colonization of 1993 and African Union Assembly decision 934 (XXXVIII) of 16 February 2025 on the qualification of slavery, deportation and colonization as crimes against humanity and genocide against the peoples of Africa, which collectively consider slavery and colonization as serious violations of human dignity and affirm the continental commitment to the recognition of these historical injustices and the healing of its wounds through reparations,

Underlining the call of the African Union's Agenda 2063 for the restoration of Africa's place in history and the healing of its wounds, including those inflicted by slavery and colonialism, and recognizing the Caribbean Community 10-point plan for reparatory justice,

Taking note of the designation by the African Union of 2025 as the "Year of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations" and of the period 2026–2036 as the Decade of Action on Reparations and African Heritage, as well as the Accra Declaration on Reparations and Racial Healing and relevant initiatives by the African Union,

Recalling that the large-scale trafficking of enslaved Africans marked a profound rupture in human history whose consequences have extended across centuries and continents and that the fifteenth century marked the critical beginning of the exceptional and dark history of the capture, forced transportation and racialized chattel enslavement of the people of Africa through the first known mass State-sponsored auction of captured Africans taken from Nar, Tider and the Bay of Arguin,

Recognizing that for 400 years the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans forcibly captured, commodified and transported millions of African men, women and children, constituting the largest forced migration in history and one of the longest-running systems of organized mass human exploitation in recorded history, with millions more dying during capture, detention and trafficking across oceans,

Acknowledging that diverse legal and moral traditions across the world have affirmed the inherent dignity of all human beings, and recognizing in particular African jurisprudence, such as the Kouroukan Fouga (Manden Charter) of 1235, which established through article 5 that everybody has a right to life and to the preservation of physical integrity and established the sovereignty of life over property,

Recognizing that Africans and people of African descent have continuously resisted, contested and litigated the crimes of slavery and the slave trade from their inception, including through the more than six-century African abolitionist tradition, early acts of resistance and testimony, State diplomacy, armed struggles and the strategic use of courts and petitions to assert human rights, dignity, autonomy over their bodies and territorial sovereignty,

Taking note of the progressive codification of the racialized chattel enslavement of Africans across the world, including the papal bull *Dum Diversas* of 18 June 1452 and the *Romanus Pontifex* of 8 January 1455, which authorized the reduction of African persons to “perpetual slavery”; the Portuguese *peça de Índias* commercial standard of 1 July 1513, which legally calculated enslaved Africans as accumulation units such that African women, children and the elderly were quantified as fractional parts of a prime male slave; the Spanish *Asiento de Negros* formalized on 18 August 1518, which transformed the African person into a “taxable commodity” under a State-licensed commercial monopoly; the Charter of the Dutch West India Company of 3 June 1621, which applied Roman-Dutch law to categorize Africans as *res mobiles* (movable furniture/property); the Barbados Slave Code of 14 May 1661, which formally classified Africans as “chattel property” under English law; the French Code Noir of March 1685, which legally defined enslaved Africans as *meubles* (movable furniture/property) stripped of all rights; and the Virginia statutory principle of *partus sequitur ventrem* (“status follows the womb”) of December 1662, which for the time created the unprecedented biologically inheritable status of property through the womb of enslaved African mothers,

Recalling the emergence of certain legal challenges and judicial developments in the eighteenth century, which questioned the legality and morality of systems of chattel enslavement of Africans,

Recalling also the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, Act No. XV entitled “the Declaration of the Powers on the Abolition of the Slave Trade of 8 February 1815”, in which the plenipotentiaries recognized the slave trade as repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality, and in the name of their sovereigns expressed their wish of putting an end to a scourge, which had so long desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity,

Welcoming the centenary in September 2026 of the Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery (Slavery Convention) adopted by the League of Nations in 1926,⁷ and noting the definition of slavery under article 1 (1) as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”,

Noting the adoption on 7 September 1956 of the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery,⁸ which defined the slave trade as including “all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with intent to reduce him to slavery; all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him; all acts of disposal by sale or exchange of a person acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged; and, in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves by whatever means of conveyance”,

Taking note that the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights⁹ reaffirmed in article 5 that “every individual shall have the right to the respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and to the recognition of his legal status” and “all forms of

⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 60, No. 1414.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 266, No. 3822.

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1520, No. 26363.

exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slave trade, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited”,

Noting that States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁰ have codified enslavement as a crime against humanity,

Reiterating that the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans violated fundamental human rights and constituted a crime against humanity,

Reaffirming that crimes related to the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans are not subject to statutory limitations,

Taking note of a fundamental principle reflected across African legal and moral traditions that “a crime does not rot”, and affirming that there can be no statutory limitations for crimes against humanity and that grave crimes generate continuing obligations until addressed through truth, justice and reparation,

Reaffirming that under international law, including the principles of the articles on responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts,¹¹ States bear responsibility for internationally wrongful acts and have an obligation to cease the act if it is continuing and to offer appropriate assurances and guarantees of non-repetition if the circumstances so require, and to make full reparation for the injury caused, which may take the form of restitution, compensation and satisfaction, either singly or in combination,

Acknowledging the importance of truth, remembrance, education and historical justice as essential components of reconciliation and sustainable peace,

Recognizing that the inception of racialized chattel enslavement was historically unprecedented in its legal and structural design, being the first global regime to codify human beings and their descendants as inheritable, alienable and perpetual property, to convert human reproduction into a mechanism of capital accumulation, and to institutionalize racial hierarchy as a governing principle of international political and economic order,

Taking note of the inception of the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement as world-breaking and world-redefining, which ushered in the racial capitalist system, transforming the fates of all peoples across the world through new racialized regimes of labour and property,

Recognizing the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans as a crime whose moral, legal, social and economic logics continue to inform structural racism, racial inequalities, underdevelopment, marginalization and socioeconomic disparities which disproportionately affect Africans and people of African descent in all parts of the world,

Acknowledging that trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans between the fifteenth and late nineteenth centuries constituted a systematic, widespread and institutionalized regime of violence, exploitation, dehumanization and racial subjugation involving States, private entities, institutions and other beneficiaries across continents and oceans,

Acknowledging also the exceptional gendered nature of the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement, in which African women and girls were systematically subjected to sexual violence, forced reproduction, domestic servitude and gender-specific forms of exploitation, and which rendered them

¹⁰ Ibid., vol. 2187, No. 38544.

¹¹ Resolution 56/83, annex.

uniquely vulnerable to multiple and aggravated forms of racial, sexual and economic domination, while also acknowledging their central role in sustaining families, cultures, resistance movements and abolitionist struggles under conditions of extreme coercion,

Noting with concern the application of statutory principles such as *partus sequitur ventrem*, which systematically exploited the reproductive and maternal rights of African women and girls and subjected them to forced reproduction of the enslaved labour force,

Acknowledging that the magnitude of victims, geographic reach, duration, commodification, State and corporate participation, and deliberate dehumanization of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans produced such enduring global consequences, including the large-scale destruction of African societies, the demographic re-engineering of continents and the entrenchment of racialized inequalities that continue to structure international relations, thereby warranting recognition of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery as the gravest crime against humanity,

Recognizing that the legacies of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade persist today in the form of structural racism, racial inequalities, underdevelopment, marginalization and socioeconomic disparities affecting Africans and people of African descent in all parts of the world,

1. *Unequivocally condemns* the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans, slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as the most inhumane and enduring injustice against humanity;

2. *Declares* the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity;

3. *Emphasizes* the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity by reason of the definitive break in world history, scale, duration, systemic nature, brutality and enduring consequences that continue to structure the lives of all people through racialized regimes of labour, property and capital;

4. *Recognizes* that the trafficking of Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans constitute violations of *jus cogens*;

5. *Reaffirms* its collective recognition of the profound and lasting impacts of the abhorrent regimes of slavery and colonialism and the persistence of racial discrimination and neo-colonialism on Africans and people of African descent and how this continues to cause immense suffering, cultural disruption, economic exploitation, emotional trauma and unending discrimination endured by Africans and people of African descent throughout history;

6. *Affirms* the importance of addressing historical wrongs affecting Africans and people of African descent in a manner that promotes justice, human rights, dignity and healing, and emphasizes that claims for reparations represent a concrete step towards remedying historical wrongs against Africans and people of African descent;

7. *Notes* that in various historical contexts, reparations and other forms of redress have been provided in respect of other grave crimes committed against particular groups, reflecting the principle under international law that international wrongful acts entail a duty of reparation, and notes with concern that no comprehensive reparatory framework has yet been realized for the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans, despite its scale, duration and enduring consequences;

8. *Calls upon* Member States, individually and collectively, to engage in inclusive, good-faith dialogue on reparatory justice, including a full and formal apology, measures of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, guarantees of non-repetition and changes to laws, programmes and services to address racism and systemic discrimination;

9. *Calls for* the prompt and unhindered restitution of cultural properties, objets d'art, monuments, museum pieces, artefacts, manuscripts and documents, and national archives that are of spiritual, historical and cultural or other value to countries of origin without charge, and urges the strengthening of international cooperation on reparations for any damage done, recognizing that this leads to the promotion of national culture and the enjoyment of cultural rights by present and future generations;

10. *Encourages* Member States to support initiatives aimed at reparatory justice and sustainable development for affected peoples, including consideration of contributions to reparations-related programmes established by relevant regional organizations;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in coordination with the United Nations system, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to strengthen coordination on remembrance, education, research and capacity-building related to the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans and its legacies;

12. *Encourages* Member States to make voluntary contributions to support coordination efforts within the United Nations system on remembrance, education, research and capacity-building related to the trafficking of enslaved Africans, racialized chattel enslavement of Africans and its enduring legacies, and also encourages Member States to cooperate with relevant initiatives of the African Union through capacity-building, technical training, and support for cultural diplomacy projects of mutual interest;

13. *Invites* the African Union, the Caribbean Community, the Organization of American States and other relevant regional and subregional organizations to collaborate with Member States and United Nations entities in developing frameworks for dialogue, cooperation and action on reparatory justice and reconciliation;

14. *Encourages* Member States to promote comprehensive educational programmes, memorialization initiatives and scholarly research on slavery, the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement of Africans and their consequences, including through curricula, museums, heritage sites and public awareness campaigns;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its eighty-second session a report on the actions taken by States in implementation of the present resolution, including progress made in remembrance, education and dialogue on reparatory justice;

16. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its eighty-second session the item entitled "Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade" to consider the report of the Secretary-General.