

I am delighted to join this community and thanks for inviting civil society to provide valuable input for your conclusions and recommendations for the OHCHR regional meeting. The inter relationship between the tripartite theme of the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) - Recognition, Justice and Development"- is significant and must be addressed together to achieve real progress in protecting the rights and implementing objectives for descendants of enslaved people of African descent. For example, the themes and our program of activities, that was submitted to the Secretariat for the WGEPAD and the OHCHR, provide a comprehensive program to address related intolerances such as the enslavement of Africans and the slave trade.

As a National Community of descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States, we have decided for ourselves a resolution and program of activities; vision for our future; how we will go about achieving it; what would be the consequences; what would be the basis of authority for doing it; particularly considering international law, IDPAD and the Durban Declaration and Programmed of Action (DDPA).

Recalling "The DDPA", Section IV. Provision of *effective remedies, recourse, redress, and other measures at the national, regional and international levels.*

The Durban recognizes that the historical injustices, such as the slave trade, have undeniably contributed to the poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity of descendants of enslaved Africans. The Conference recognizes the need to develop programs for the social and economic development. One of the remedies is the **"Facilitation of a welcomed return and resettlement of the descendants of enslaved Africans."**

Therefore, our program of activities submitted to the WEPAD and OHCHR, through the full implementation of the IDPAD and the DDPA, is to **"facilitate a welcome return and resettlement of the descendants of enslaved Africans in the USA to Africa"- Our National Community.**

This is a great opportunity to reflect on ways and means that governments from different regions in partnership with, civil society, development agencies and regional organizations, may pursue to integrate the provisions of our Programs of Activities in their policies, programs and strategies tailored for our return and resettlement.

As an expert in the U.S. of the legacies of the past and the narrative that descendants of enslaved Africans in the U.S. need equal rights or to be equal with other people is a misnomer. The first tripartite theme of 'Recognition - We simply want to be recognized as a people, express our universal human right of self-determination and development. We are not seeking to pursue the never-ending human right struggle for racial equality. These are the issues at the heart of the discussion on descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States.

When we speak about the second theme of the Decade- Justice, we seek justice for the slave trade and the third theme is Development – Development of our land. I quote "There is an inextricable link between the three themes of the International Decade and I am sure you will delve deeper into the linkages throughout the Regional meeting. In my view, only through the recognition of the past, true justice is possible; likewise, real development can only be enjoyed by people of African descent when justice is upheld."

The second part of my input is forming Regional working groups and committees. Just as the OHCHR have Regional meetings, there should be "Regional Working Groups of Experts of Descendants of Enslaved People of African Descent." These groups should be composed of descendants of enslaved Africans from that region. If there were a Working Group of Experts on People of Belgium Descent, I am quite sure Belgium would agree, the working group should be composed of Belgium people who had ancestors born, educated, lived and were citizens in Belgium. Belgium would also agree the working group should not be predominantly made up of Africans from the Congo. After all, there are over 38 million descendants of enslaved Africans in the U.S. and millions of experts on our rights and state in the U.S. We know our situation better than any other and we are not seeking to continually fight a never-ending battle to be racially equal with no other people, but to exercise our right to self-determination and development.

These regional groups will provide civil society the opportunity to contribute to the development and implementation of UN mandates and prepare them for the OHCHR Regional Meetings. Also, gender balance within the groups and committees. For example, it is well noted at this regional meeting there are more (black) woman than men and no men from one of the largest populations of (experts) Africans outside the continent of Africa (USA). P

Working Groups and Committees recommendations:

- Working Group of Experts for Descendants of Enslaved Africans in the United States (WEDEA USA)
- Regional Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (against descendant of enslaved Africans) USA (CERD USA).
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (descendant of enslaved Africans) CEDAW USA)
- Regional Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the **Durban** Declaration and Program of Action (IGWG USA)
- Grass root Ambassadors (IDPAD) and not athletes, actors, comedians or musicians. These people are not accessible.
- Gender Balance

The International Decade for people of African descent has brought us all together. I recommend all stakeholders to effectively fully implement the General Assembly resolution and Program of Activities of the International Decade and the Durban Declaration and extol the work of the WGPAD. I am sure the conclusions and recommendations will provide strong incentive to Member States, civil society and all other stakeholders to implement the important objectives of the International Decade.