

## STATEMENT of THE DRAMMEH INSTITUTE

### REGIONAL MEETING FOR EUROPE, CENTRAL ASIA AND NORTH AMERICA ON THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT Organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

23-24 November 2017 - Venue: Room XIX Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

The International Decade for People of African Descent was born by unprecedented circumstance, and serves in memoriam for people of African Descent, after centuries of non self-expression and the right to bond. As such, we are pleased that it sets the stage for a great opportunity to undertake useful introspection and scrutiny of our historical record. Yet, we are keenly aware of the challenges facing us for the next seven years, as it relates to the Decade's themes, Recognition, Justice, and Development.

We open this statement of concern by first,

REAFFIRMING that the African continent and its people have served as a millennia-long reservoir for uncompensated labor obtained through brutal processes from the trans Atlantic, Mediterranean, Nile Valley and Indian Ocean areas and "trade" routes. Whereas, Africans have historically become people whose enslavement, genocide, and invisibility amongst all others, has for centuries, assumed intercontinental forms.

RECOGNIZING THAT THE DECADE NEEDS ROBUST FUNDING, there is need for increased action from States to fund visibility campaigns for the Decade with appropriate international mechanisms to develop capacity-building programmes intended for Africans and people of African descent in the Americas and around the world as referenced in Article 6 of the DDPA.

WE RECOGNIZE that the honeymoon had faded since the launch of the International Decade People of African Descent. However, celebrity-ship has continued with institutions hosting events, in good faith, but with little known history of how the Decade came to be with the labor and commitment of civil society leadership that never gave up. This ambivalence leaves the legacy-discussion of the Durban Declaration's Program of Action unrealized. Such anomaly produces cosmetic success, as well as, missed opportunities for making the Decade and the DDPA as prominent as it was intended to be.

In matters of human heritages, the current state of archives, languages and cultures cannot be understated. Assessing deteriorating circumstances of archives in marginalized communities of African descent in general, and in Africa in particular, reveal largely damaged or obliterated archives in regions recovering from war, conflict or natural disasters.

WE RECOGNIZE in the matter of Reparatory Justice for people of African descent, it also means the safeguarding of cultural heritages from future damages. This includes insuring that public spaces are free of hostile iconography that mocks the humanity of people of African Descent. In this regard, we note with profound alarm and dismay, the monuments, structures and cultural practices that continue to demean the humanity of people of African descent in the streets of New York, the American South and in Europe with images reminiscent of a violent past.

There are those who say that enslaving Africans was the law of the day. However, we say African people's right to humanity was the law of the very same day. And so, during this Decade we seek linguistic Reparations. And that is to correct the language about the enslavement experience of African people as a "slave trade", and call it a genocidal experience. In this vain, we rely on the Program of Action which has urged States to promote the full and accurate inclusion of the history and contribution of Africans and people of African descent in the education curriculum.

Magnifying the pillar of Recognition during this Decade with the appropriate funding, will help pave the way for development.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The formulation of a committee that would be positioned to receive appeals about African archives current status and possibly identify new sites and collections with the oversight of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization and International Council for Archives. This would include reviewing recommendation that support the advocacy for the return of art and artifacts to their place of origin wherever possible, as well as, monitoring the requests for new sites of interest.
2. Support the current development of a cotton monument and educational interpretive center in the United States that pays tribute to cotton labor of enslaved Africans. Whereas, cotton served as the number one driver for 200 years, and of all global industries combined, none of them measured the profits that were made in cotton.
3. Considering countries have mandated the study of event-based experiences of a people, we recommend UNESCO's full support to encourage international curriculums on cotton that illuminate the intergenerational impact on black life. Whereas, the study of cotton provides interdisciplinary lessons in global history, the humanities, economics as well as the means to study science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM) related fields, which continue to be necessary in the production of cotton.