

1st UN PFPAD Session
Item 4: Introductory Statements
Monday, 5th December 2022
11AM Geneva Time
Room XVIII
Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

Madame Chair, thank you.

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates and guests, global experts, Forum colleagues, the PFPAD Secretariat, organisers, contributors, greetings everyone.

I thank you very much for the occasion to share my introductory statement. Thank you very much.

Collectively, we are representing civil society, academia, the private sector, the public sector, among others, here in Geneva (virtually and in-person); also, responding further to pressing calls to address contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by People of African Descent, including human rights violations connected to violent and excessive uses of force by law enforcement agencies. Indeed, we (collectively) are connected with monumental works linked to racial justice movements started, continued and approaching.

My UN PFPAD colleagues and I are tasked, therefore, with providing expert advice and recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and additional United Nations bodies. Advice and recommendations aimed at addressing challenges resulting from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance confronting People of African Descent that impede their human rights.

Alas, for too long, that which has been proclaimed (in speeches, papers, conferences, meetings) is far removed from realities on the ground; another reason why we (collectively) are here. I welcome a 1st Session that achieves its goals set out; as well as goes beyond expectations.

For example, it is significant to firmly call upon state and non-state actors from the village level to the United Nations level to engage in commitments toward equality, justice, and reparations, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to Leave No One Behind.

Also, I am pensive about us (collectively), here in Geneva, as contributors to the 1st Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. For instance, among the hundreds of people within this meeting area, there are hundreds who have travelled here (and are staying in Geneva) whilst there are millions of people far removed. Why and who, I ponder.

Arguably, a most pressing challenge (in addition to the ever growing challenge of ascertaining necessary funds for the Permanent Forum's urgent work) is essential access. Having many more People of African Descent to have critical access, for instance, not only People of African Descent who are formally-educated, not only People of African Descent who have graduated from Ivy League universities, not only People of African Descent who have disposal income, and (dare I express) not only People of African Descent who are heterosexual. Africa (our Motherland), as we know, has been much about inclusion rather than exclusion. We express very well our diversity.

In this regard, as we (collectively) continue to recognise the interconnectedness of past to present; I ask for more of the following.

1. Fostering wider access to discussions about the core international human rights instruments, the United Nations system, the Human Rights Council, and the Permanent Forum's nine-point mandate.
2. Creating more inclusive spaces to gather, process and respond to comments as well as suggestions about the draft United Nations Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of People of African Descent.
3. Promoting greater awareness about the United Nations work related to People of African Descent, with pertinence to reducing societal stigma and discrimination as well as expanding consultative platforms.

I close here with a renewed dedication towards advocacy for realised human rights for all (e.g. children, women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth, migrants, people with disabilities, men).

Thank you.