

Transcript for Tuesday, December 6, 2022, at 5 pm

UN Forum on People of African Descent Session

Hello and thank you, Madam Chair for allowing me to address this distinguished body. I am the Reverend Dr. Sheila Harvey, a United Church of Christ pastor and author of Messages of Hope: Preaching Peace and Justice for All. It is my distinct pleasure to serve as a representative of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, at the World Council of Churches.

Reparatory Justice is vital to the work of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. But for the Forum to be effective, it will require adequate funding. Currently, the United Nations funds less than 2 percent of its budget for all racial justice efforts. We must do better if we are to eradicate racism.

Twenty-one years ago, at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the Ecumenical Caucus Statement was read by Archbishop Desmond Tutu stating that: “Racism is a sin. It is contrary to God’s will for love, peace, equality, justice, and compassion for all. It is an affront to human dignity and a gross violation of human rights.”

Today, we celebrate the efforts all have made to bring this permanent forum on people of African descent to fruition. The theological foundation has been laid. Now, it is time for us to act by widely spreading the news about the UN’s global effort to address the sin of racism from the transatlantic slave trade to the structural and systemic racism that followed and continues.

Boosting budgetary reparatory efforts can offer full access to comprehensive education, quality healthcare, environmental protection, socio-economic development, and equal integration into the global community for people of African descent, which is necessary and long overdue.

Thus, my recommendation to the Forum on People of African Descent is to advocate for a more robust budget from the United Nations, along with seeking additional financial support from its Member States, and NGOs.

So, let us move forward together, with Hope, trusting that this momentous and historic effort will be realized with the belief that all good things are possible with God. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the privilege of my time.