



Black
Diplomats
Academy



Permanent Forum for People of African Descent

December 7, 2022

Thank you, Madame Chair and congratulations on the achievement of this historic forum. I am pleased for the opportunity to contribute to this landmark discussion.

My name is Candies Kotchapaw, I am the founder and executive director of Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow, Today (DYLOTT). We are a Canadian NGO, that is a Black youth focused leadership incubator supporting African descend children and young professionals from age 8-35. We formed the Black Diplomats Academy as the policy engagement and advocacy arm of the organization to support the career trajectory development of African Canadian youth and African descent youth globally. We apply the Sustainable Development Goals to advance the concept of Black Diplomacy – which means, we use our lived experience to navigate structural systems that were not made for our meaningful participation in positive changemaking.

Through the policy advocacy work of the Academy on behalf of Black Canadian and African diaspora youth, we have been tracking the application of the UNDPAD themes of Recognition, Justice and Development and the SDGs to advance legislative, economic and environmental justice with young people as the key policy activators on behalf of communities. Our work has enabled us to observe and report on the proceedings of the High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals in New York, the Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, the National Black Canadians Summit in Nova Scotia and the unprecedented opportunity to speak during this historic movement and moment that is the PFPAD.

The adoption of the PFPAD in 2021 gave us a distinct opportunity and mechanism to tie our advocacy to. However, we realize that the Forum itself is yet to have a pronounced strategy for youth engagement and succession planning for youth leadership now and for the foreseeable future. In every society, young people are regarded for their creativity, ease of dexterity with technology and responsibility to solve the challenges that they involuntarily inherit from their elders.

Thinking of the tools at the disposal of young people such as the ability to mobilize large groups across wide regions for example leaders such as Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate, or Tiaji Sio, Founder of the German Diplomats of Colour Network – who agitated the systemic anti-Black racism in the German Foreign Service towards greater inclusion – and so many other world leading youth of African Descent, their ability to utilize new technologies to help drive innovation in our economies is unparalleled, it is my belief the youth action and advocacy should be seen as an opportunity to strategize collaboratively with elders to help advance Recognition, Justice and Development for People of African descent.

In Canada and on the international stage we have been advocating that the best way to undergird youth leadership development is to remove structural barriers to progress and success. We understand that economic inequities, institutional discrimination and structural barriers are pervasive enemies to youth leadership advancement. So also is political will. We call on the mechanisms that pre-date the PFPAD to operationalize the resources necessary to intentionally activate Black youth engagement in meaningful and tangible ways.

The Permanent Forum is an opportunity to include the perspectives of young leaders whose voices have otherwise been marginalized or excluded from policy decision-making conversations. For the PFPAD, we encourage the adoption and expansion of a youth specific arm of the Forum that drives legislative, economic and environmental policy action and advocacy globally. The Black Diplomats Academy has already begun this work through our Black Diplomacy Global Summit. Bringing together youth experts across Continental Africa and the diaspora, with intergenerational allies across government, corporate and community institutions. In 2022, the Black Diplomacy Global Summit featured a four-day solution-focused event on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals within Black communities. As part of the activities of the Academy, we produce “working papers” as recommendations on how the UNDPAD themes, the application of the Sustainable Development Goals and the five member states of the PFPAD can collectively work to address and move intentionally towards solving the human rights challenges continually experienced by Black communities globally.

Since our Black Diplomacy Summit is positioned to act as a focal point for youth, intergenerational and cross-sectoral collaboration, we therefore call for the PFPAD to institute an annual mid-point review of the progress of achieving the modalities of the Forum, similar to the Voluntary National Reviews during the High-Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals, we call for this review to occur each year through our Black Diplomacy Global Summit with the following conditions:

- Establish support for youth of African Descent from the Caribbean, Canada and Continental Africa to have meaningful representation and inclusion in the decision-making and operationalization of the Forum.
- Create dedicated funding to address the economic disparities facing youth and youth serving organizations of African Descent that serves as a barrier to participation of Black young people in important discussions and activities at the UN level.
- Formalize intentional assignment of key responsibilities to ensure there continues to be connections between the UN systems and the communities that are being served.
- Convene at least six months ahead of the general meeting of the PFPAD in continental Africa and the diaspora, with the locations being determined by a Youth Secretariat.
- Mid-point review and measurement of the progress towards achieving modalities of the Forum, with a view towards incremental achievement within 3, 5 and 10 year periods.
- Setting the intergenerational priorities that intentionally include the perspectives of and leadership from African Descent youth.
- Collaboration to set the agenda for each PFPAD meeting and the priorities for the subsequent year.

Given the historical systemic exclusion of Black voices from UN-related policy engagement, we call for the PFPAD to also embed in the draft Declaration:

- A special accreditation process outside of the conventional ECOSOC mechanism, that prioritizes the engagement of Black young leaders and civil society representatives to attend and contribute to the negotiations, promotion and implementation of activities relating to: Climate Change, Economic Development and Legislative instruments to address human rights violations against People of African Descent.
- Mandatory attendance and participation in Fora of consequence such as the Conference of the Parties, World Economic Forum, G20 and others be an established target for the intentional amplification of Black leadership.

Thank you excellencies for your time.