

Statement by H.E. Cheryl Spencer
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Jamaica
Inaugural Meeting of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent
United Nations, Geneva
5th December 2022

Madame Chair,

Jamaica is pleased to participate in this historic inaugural meeting of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

Despite efforts, including increased advocacy, people of African descent continue to face racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, in many cases remaining invisible, unrecognized, and without a voice. Indeed, our rights continue to be denied.

Jamaica, therefore, joins others in congratulating the members of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent on their election to this body and to thank them for their insightful statements this morning.

For my country, the significance of this forum cannot be overemphasized as we have played and continue to play a leadership role in the advocacy for racial equality, racial equity racial justice, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Our advocacy is underpinned by the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments such as the Convention on Racial Discrimination, before which we appeared recently, and which is chaired by one of our own, Prof. Verene Shepherd.

Jamaica firmly supports the mandate of this Forum, a well needed platform, and a critical pillar in the fight to eliminate systemic discrimination. It is our firm belief that the Forum will contribute

to the efforts of States and other stakeholders to secure the fundamental rights and freedoms of People of African Descent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and racism.

The Government has been pursuing several initiatives to address the legacies of our colonial heritage, which relate to inter alia, land ownership, education, colourism and health. These include legislative reforms, public education campaigns, training, and capacity building of all sectors of the society.

These initiatives, we believe, are already bearing fruit and will help to address some of the systemic challenges that can be identified as drivers of poverty and discrimination among people of African Descent. It is also intended to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

The provisional agenda for this session is, therefore, timely. We express our sincere hope that the deliberations over the next few days will be fruitful and will contribute to our collective efforts to dismantle the systemic shackles that continue to keep us bound.

We align ourselves with the Statement delivered by the distinguished representative of The Bahamas on behalf of CARICOM Member States in Geneva.

I thank you.