

## **Second Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent,**

**New York City, 30 May- 2 June 2023, NYHQ**

### **Concept Note**

#### **Overview**

The Second Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD) will take place from 30 May to 2 June 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, United States of America. The PFPAD will bring together human rights activists of African descent, Member States, United Nations organs and bodies, intergovernmental and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society representatives, and other relevant stakeholders for four days of thematic discussions, side events and special events. The overarching theme of the Second Session is *Realizing the dream: A United Nations Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent*. The Second Session will be part of a global consultative process with a focus on five thematic panels on global reparatory justice, Pan-Africanism, transnational migration, data-collection for recognising and addressing systemic and structural racism, and health, well-being and intergenerational trauma.

#### **1. Global Reparatory Justice**

Colonialism and the enslavement of Africans and people of African descent have had a profound effect on communities and countries around the world. There is no timeline on racism and the inhumanity it has utilized in the oppression of people of African descent in the past, the present and its consolidation for the future. The impact is manifested in the intergenerational trauma that transcends the past and the healing process must commence with the recognition of the culpability of colonial governments and their public and private enterprises. As the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) established, many of the domestic and international inequities we see in the world today have been deeply shaped by histories and legacies of colonialism and enslavement. Including, lasting consequences of centuries of dehumanization, subjugation, violence, trauma, loss of culture, home, kin, attendant senses of self, impoverishment, systemic and structural racism. Reparations recognizes the critical importance of addressing the legacy of colonialism and the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and many prominent global challenges with a profound impact on the enjoyment of human rights of peoples of African descent. As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises, sustainable development requires a transformation of our world towards greater equity within and among countries—a world in which no one is left behind and all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. The opening thematic panel of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum will discuss how reparatory justice can serve global transformations towards sustainable social and international orders by effectively recognizing, addressing and correcting lasting consequences of past injustices and crimes against people of African descent.

## **2. Pan-Africanism for Dignity, Justice, and Peace**

Pan-Africanism was and still is a global movement for the liberation of Africans and people of African descent from colonialism, enslavement, subjugation, and systemic and structural racism. The African Union is founded on Pan-Africanism. Its Agenda 2063—which marks its establishment in 1963 and is integral to 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—is “rooted in Pan Africanism and African Renaissance, provides a robust framework for addressing past injustices and the realisation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the African Century”. This includes establishing dynamic and mutually beneficial links between Africa and people of African descent in the Diaspora. This thematic panel will focus on how the work of the Permanent Forum and the forthcoming United Nations Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent can contribute to Pan-African goals and aspirations. The metamorphoses of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance will be addressed, with special note of its founding leaders’ focuses on liberation and justice as well as contemporary emphases on the “importance of inclusive and participatory processes in amplifying the voices of all people of African descent from all parts of the world, that also have been subjected to structural racism and racial discrimination as reflected in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres.”

## **3. Transnational Migration**

As the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) recognizes, migration is increasing from the Global South to the Global North. It is especially critical that laws, policies and practices towards migration effectively combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirms that migration is a multidimensional reality, which includes countries of origin, transit and destination, and requires coherent and comprehensive responses. It promises that the international community will cooperate to ensure “safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons.” The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018)—which upholds principles of non-regression, non-discrimination and the elimination of all forms of discrimination in the realization of the human rights of migrants, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance—is a step towards fulfilling this promise. The increasing migration of people of African descent across the world due to such issues as climate change and natural disasters, poverty, political instability, and armed conflicts calls for expanded, multi-dimensional, intersectional understandings of, and solutions to, migration. This panel will focus on solution-oriented conversations and recommendations, while highlighting the crises of Haitian migrants within the Caribbean as well as to the North and South America and migrants of African descent around, across and in the Mediterranean, one of the deadliest waterways in the world.

## **4. An Evidence-Based Approach to Recognizing and Addressing Systemic and Structural Racism: Data Collection for People of African Descent**

Part of the mandate of Permanent Forum is to “support the coordination of programs aimed at the socioeconomic development of communities and people of African descent” and to “enable the systematic design and collection of and access to high-quality, reliable and timely disaggregated data and gender statistics, conducive to the better execution of public policies in relation to people of African descent.” Members of the Permanent Forum (at the 1<sup>st</sup> session of Permanent Forum) “affirmed the urgent need for Member States to collect disaggregated data on people of African descent based on race, sex, gender, age, geographic (rural/urban) location,

employment, economic status; to identify, monitor, and track disparities and hold themselves accountable for the human rights situation of people of African descent as well as for measurable Sustainable Development Goals, racial justice indicators and policy targets, and reviewing the effectiveness and impacts of policies and laws.” Also, among the recommendations of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session, is a focus on the “development of official United Nations Guidelines and a Handbook for a comprehensive human rights-based and data-driven approach to recognising and addressing systemic and structural racism against people of African descent”. This thematic panel will elaborate on the need and possible recommendations, projects and other initiatives at the United Nations level for an evidence-based approach to recognizing and addressing systemic and structural racism as it affects people of African descent.

## **5. Health, Well-Being, and Intergenerational Trauma**

Health is a fundamental human right. For example, the Constitution of the World Health Organization (1946) establishes the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of all human beings, whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) affirms the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001) urges States, individually and through international cooperation, to enhance measures to fulfil this right with a view to eliminating disparities in health status, as indicated in standard health indexes, which might result from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Recognizing, coping with and resisting the effects of systemic and structural racism on health and well-being has been a long-standing and central theme of African descendent communities across the world, as reflected in nurturing and supportive community practices, religion, music, literature, and other cultural expressions. In recent decades there has also been a growing research interest in the effects of racism on the health and well-being of people of African descent—including, inter- and transgenerational socially or even epigenetically transmitted effects of trauma, rates of maternal and infant mortality, high rates of gender-based violence, non-communicable diseases and disproportionate fatalities from COVID-infection. This thematic panel offers an opportunity for a conversation on how to promote the right to health and well-being of people of African descent and the way to integrate these subjects in the Declaration, the work of the Permanent Forum, the United Nations system, Member States, and communities.

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