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‘Navigating spaces, negotiating to enter and thrive in workplaces, hoping to receive as I give good graces but often rejected, disrespected, undervalued, invisible on the bases, of the skin I am in. Black, Woman, Caribbean, Sister, Daughter of the African continent...happy to be celebrating Freedom, Justice, Peace, Solidarity in these places where traces of faces all look like me.’

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all today to celebrate this second meeting of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

I extend a special welcome to my Caribbean brothers and sisters here in the room and online: I am proud to be representing you.

After 185 years of emancipation, we remember, we celebrate, we honour the resilience of people of African descent, in the Caribbean and throughout the Americas. We pay tribute to our ancestors in these countries who never stopped fighting for liberation from enslavement; colonialism; segregation; systemic, structural, and institutional racism; and similar systems built on the alleged superiority of one race. In paying tribute, we have an obligation to continue the fight against injustice, race-based discrimination, and all vestiges of slavery and colonialism, including in those remaining colonial territories in this region.

As Forum Members, we continue to call for and work toward reparatory justice, climate justice and restitution for People of African Descent. We call for a second International Decade for People of African Descent, for the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and for the implementation of recommendations for other UN anti-racism mechanisms.

Fully committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Women of African Descent, I pledge to continue to promote the civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights of all Black women, on the continent and in the Diaspora. I will continue to work with you, governmental and non-governmental organisations, toward improving the situation of Black women in both the private and public spheres of their lives.

Intersections of blackness and womanhood have historically placed women of African descent at the bottom of almost every social development and organisational index. Moreover, these intersections often render Black women invisible in the collection and analysis of data and evidence-based research, in global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in national policies, programmes and processes. This cannot continue. We must have disaggregated statistics and evidence to develop effective policies to address Black women’s rights to a life free from violence, their access to health, education, sexual and reproductive rights as well as their right to access land and productive resources, among others.

Madam Chair, I would like to wrap up my comments by calling for additional support, financial and human resources, for the Permanent Forum to ensure that we can effectively carry out the important work of promoting the human rights, lives, and livelihoods of People of African Descent.

I look forward to constructive dialogue over the next few days. Again, I welcome your participation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.