

Towards a Decolonial Framework for the Second Decade for People of African Descent

Introduction

My participation on the panel is presented as the summary of the declaration created as part of the outcomes of the Preliminary Meeting on the 3rd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (PFPAD), which took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from March 25-27, 2024. The preliminary meeting was curated by the International Coalition of People of African Descent (ICPAD) and the Pan-African Council (PAC) in partnership with the African Union (AU) Secretariat of the Economic and Social Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), the Frantz Fanon Foundation, and Dalhousie University, Canada. The underscored interventions represent the collective voices that organized, attended, contributed, and drafted the declaration as recommendations that should be taken up by the new decade. The meeting's primary objectives were to foster purposeful dialogues, exchanges, and action in preparation for the third session on the PFPAD. Moreover, to establish an effective working relationship with ECOSOCC in support of the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 Aspiration 2, achieving "an integrated continent, politically united that is based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of an African Renaissance."

Breakdown and Main Themes

For my talk today, I will briefly highlight three of the five essential topics explored and recommendations produced by the participants from each working group, which must be taken up as action items for the new decade. First, implementing decolonial reparative justice frameworks to advance the cause of Black liberation in confronting racial capitalism; second, addressing the continuous systematic violence against PAD in situations of forced migration on

people of African descent in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region; and lastly, true political and economic sovereignty for the first Black Republic, Haiti.

Reparations and Decolonization

Participants from the working group emphasize the imperative of reparations as a means to confront historical injustices, dismantle systems of oppression, and work towards a more just and equitable world. For us, reparations should not be a binary opposite of decolonization; rather, the two must be in sync with each other in articulating Black futures that are detached from Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies. Decolonization asks two fundamental questions: “What is required to reverse 500 years of history to make a new world?” and “How can we think of reparations and decolonization as complementary processes rather than at odds?” Reparations can only be a project that is collective and political. Moreover, decolonial reparations should not be limited to financial recompense; instead, it must seek justice and reconciliation in fostering futures that eradicate all forms of racism and exploitation. A decolonial reparations approach must include decolonizing the mind and institutions that reproduce coloniality. Decolonization of the mind starts with the education system. The education systems continue to devalue people of African descent and our knowledge production. In our conversations on decolonizing the system and international mechanisms, we must work with or create alternative mechanisms to advance our agenda. As the self-described “black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,” Audre Lorde states, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Essentially, decolonial reparations cannot occur using the same oppressive instruments grounded in racial capitalism; rather, reparations must change the paradigm of domination based on capitalism. For instance, we can presently observe the limitations of international law in addressing the issue of reparative justice for people of African descent. As a counter, we should explore other legal mechanisms, such as

Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL). The necessary changes cannot be made without Africans and Afro-descendants and without stopping the endless war particularly imposed on many states, Palestine, Haiti among others. Let us not forget that the fight against institutional and structural racism is a political struggle and that its success depends on the will of the international community. When will that community finally take up its responsibility? Africans, Afro-descendants, and all racialized people are waiting!

Forced Migration and the Militarization of Migration Control in the MENA Region

The second point we would like to highlight concerns migration. Forced displacement remains a critical issue in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including the Mediterranean, driven by a complex interplay of historical legacies, ongoing conflicts, environmental degradation, and the persistent effects of colonialism. An urgent need for a multi-pronged approach is necessary to address the root causes of forced migration, dismantle the militarization of borders that perpetuates the extreme violence on Africans in situations of human mobility, and foster collaborative solutions for displaced communities. The historical and ongoing impact of colonialism continues to fuel displacement, particularly for racialized minorities in Africa. Educational systems often fail to acknowledge this legacy, perpetuating a narrative that ignores the exploitation and resource extraction that contribute to environmental devastation and economic instability. The militarization of migration control violates human rights and exacerbates the suffering of refugees and migrants. Militarized borders create a climate of fear and violence, hindering access to safe havens and essential services.

Recommendations: I would now like to highlight three of our proposed recommendations:

1. **Transforming Education:** The UN Permanent Forum should urge MENA region governments to develop and implement **inclusive curricula** at all levels (primary, secondary, and undergraduate) that accurately portray the **history of colonialism and its enduring consequences**. This curriculum should be developed by African scholars and educators to ensure a culturally sensitive and historically accurate perspective.
2. **Addressing Root Causes:** MENA region states must commit to **transforming policies** that have a negative impact on their populations, particularly those impacting African communities. This includes addressing the climate crisis, promoting sustainable development, and fostering peaceful solutions to ongoing conflicts.
3. **Demilitarizing Borders:** States must prioritize **demilitarization of borders** and ensure a secure and humane environment for people in human mobility. Law enforcement practices must be reformed to prevent violence against migrants and refugees.

This comprehensive approach, combining educational reform, policy changes, border demilitarization, PAD support, and information dissemination, is essential to addressing the root causes of forced migration, protecting the rights and dignity of displaced people, and fostering a future where migration is a safe and informed choice, not a desperate necessity.

Slide 5 – Haiti: One of the primary objectives of the second decade, led by the permanent forum, must be to collaborate with the Haitian people to obtain genuine political and economic sovereignty for Haiti, the first Black Republic. The organizations gathered in Lusaka for the preliminary meeting echoed the voices and demands of Haitian civil society and social movements regarding their autonomy, which is undermined by external interference by the international community, the Core Group, the USA, and its foreign policy. The conversation on Haiti was in response to ICPAD and the Frantz Fanon Foundation’s mission to Haiti in 2023.

The outcome of these two crucial moments informed the declaration drafted specifically for the case of Haiti.

Declaration on Haiti

1. We, as a collective, support the efforts of the Haitian social movement and grassroots organizations in getting the reimbursement of illegal debt imposed by France in 1825, the return of the stolen gold reserved by the US in 1914, and reparation for enslavement, colonization, and illegal occupation.
2. We demand political and economic support to establish **an independent People's Tribunal for all crimes committed against Haitians** from 1914 until today, including the MINUSTAH occupation from 2004-2017, in the shortest time frame possible.
3. We reject the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2699, which imposes a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in coordination with the Haitian National Police, the external interference of foreign States, international institutions, and organizations, informal intergovernmental groups, NGOs, or **any non-Haitian actors**.
4. We call for **the immediate and definitive suspension of arms suppliers in Haiti**.
5. Finally, we call for solutions to Haiti's multidimensional crisis that requires only Haitian-led initiatives. We urge the international community to consider and respectfully consider the Montana Agreement as a comprehensive Haitian solution to the crisis.

Conclusion: To conclude, we firmly believe that the three underlined themes must be addressed in the second decade, or its existence will be futile. While we acknowledge the significance of a second decade, it is essential that it is built on concrete actions. As individuals of African descent, we possess a deep understanding of the issues at hand, and it is now time to approach them from a decolonial perspective. Failing to do so will only perpetuate neocolonialism, fueled

by racial capitalism, which further dehumanizes Black life. We, ICPAD and PAC, are eager to collaborate with organizations and individuals who share a genuine commitment to working within a radical pan-African framework to attain Black liberation.