

Recommendation Statement by Caribbean Pan African Network and Bonaire Human Rights Organization to the Third United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

Geneva - April 20, 2024

The Caribbean Pan-African Network (CPAN) and Bonaire Human Rights Organization (BHRO) urge the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent to address the pressing issue of colonialism in the Caribbean region. Despite the implementation efforts of the past three United Nations International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2020) no less than 20 colonies still exist in the Caribbean, directly impacting the descendants of African heritage.

One primary objective of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent is to pursue Reparatory Justice, a cause that aligns with our recommendation.

We propose that the Permanent Forum adopts a key initiative within a Second Decade for People of African Descent, focusing on Reparatory Justice for the Caribbean Peoples of African Descent. This initiative should prioritize and collaborate with efforts towards the decolonization of the remaining Caribbean territories.

It is imperative for both the Caribbean and the international community to prioritize this issue.

The abolition of slavery in the Caribbean, spanning from 1834 to 1886, did not equate to complete emancipation. Instead, it ushered in over a century and a half of colonial rule before independence was achieved by many Caribbean nations. Yet, today, some 20 Caribbean territories inhabited by African descendants remain colonized.

The years 2020-2030 are designated as the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, aiming to eliminate contemporary colonial practices that infringe upon the inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the UN Charter, the Decolonization Declaration, and relevant human rights instruments. Resolution 48/7 of 2021 of the Human Rights Council highlights the negative impact of colonial legacies on human rights enjoyment.

World Wars I and II and their aftermath underscored the struggle of enslaved and colonized peoples for freedom and equality, resulting in over 80 million lives lost. This sacrifice has fostered a global consciousness that rejects the subjugation of any people or nation. Indeed, the very birth of the United Nations is rooted in the commitment to uphold international peace and security based on the principles of equal human rights and self-determination for all peoples.

The inalienable right to self-determination is enshrined in various international human rights instruments, affirming the freedom of all peoples to determine their political status and pursue their socio-economic and cultural development. These include Articles 1 and 55 of the United Nations Charter, Article 73 of the UN Charter, Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 (UN Decolonization Declaration), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In light of these principles and the sad reality of the persisting historical injustice of colonial rule, we urge the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent to take decisive action towards Reparatory Justice for the Caribbean Peoples of African Descent by prioritizing the decolonization of remaining Caribbean territories. This is not just a matter of historical rectification but a fundamental step towards achieving true equality and justice for all.

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