

Esteemed Chair, honorable delegates, and guests of this Permanent Forum,

The Universal Negro Improvement Association which I represent, was founded by Marcus Mosiah Garvey in 1914, to advocate for the rights of Africans at home and abroad. It was our organization that first petitioned the League of Nations for the recognition, justice, and development of African people.

In the aftermath of World War I, we sought not merely words, but tangible redress and proposed that the relinquished colonies of Germany be used to make reparations and facilitate repatriation. Our calls were met with silence. When the Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World was drafted at the UNIA's first international convention in 1920 it was then presented to the League in 1922, but once again they turned a deaf ear. Even the personal entreaties of Garvey came to Geneva in 1928 and 1931 did not sway the hearts of those in power. The records are here to prove it.

Yet, from this legacy of injustice, this Forum's emergence stands as the culmination of century's struggle with the first international decade intersecting with the UNIA's centenary in 2014. Significantly, the UN IDPAD represents the realization of article 53 of our 1920 Declaration that August 31 be an international day for Africans. The global solidarity witnessed after George Floyd's martyrdom was symbolized by our red, black, and green flag declared in article 39 and reignited a worldwide call to justice out of which this permanent forum was born. Now we must ensure that no political machinations divide us. We must hold together under all climes and in every country.

As we look fwd to observing a second International Decade for People of African Descent, let us acknowledge the profound debt owed to Haiti, a cradle of liberty, and mobilize all our resources to support them through their trials. The 21st century has seen strides toward reparations and repatriation, but we must now confront restrictive, racist and ridiculous visa policies that contravene the rights of Africans to travel unmolested throughout the world as articulated in Declaration 35 of the 1920 Negro Rights.

This is a call to action, to change, to unity that I bring before you today. It is the fulfillment of Garvey's own prophetic words that "The world shall hear from my principles even two thousand years hence," let us pledge to complete the mission he embarked upon over a century ago.

Next year, the African Union will unveil a bronze bust of Garvey in Ethiopia, we now ask that this Forum advocate for his recognition here at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva where he visited twice. It is time to honor a man whose ideas were ahead of his time—a man whose moment has come at last.