

Statement at The 3rd United Nations Forum for People of African Descent in Geneva Switzerland

Good evening all and thank you for this opportunity to speak here at the 3rd forum. Congratulations Dr. June Soomer on your appointment as Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum for the People of African Descent (PFPAD).

My name is Princewill Ogban, I am the Director of Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC).

As a Black person, my life has been and continues to be impacted by almost all aspects of Anti-Black Racism and that is why I worked with my CEO, senior management team, and all employees including allies to get the National Gallery of Canada become the first Federal Art Institution in Canada sign to the signatory of the United Nations Decade for the People of African Descent (UNDPAD) on Canada's Emancipation Day August 1st, 2023. As part of the signatory, we committed to an intent to have a collection of Global African Artworks at the gallery.

At NGC, we completed Phase 1 of the collection gap analysis, a preliminary research to understand the representation of our art collection. we analyzed over sixty-eight thousand artworks to understand the equity representation of our collection. We will be initiating Phase II of the Collection Gap Analysis where we will collect additional data on the artists whose works we have in the collection to better understand the representation within the collection of Black and racialized artists, 2SLGBTQIA+ artists, artists with disabilities, and more.

I want to express my appreciation that the forum continues to include side sessions focused on arts. I would like to see more inclusion of arts as strategies and actions to highlight the history of anti-Black racism and highlight it through arts acquisitions and exhibitions across art institutions and galleries globally. Imagine if the artwork on the Ibo landing which Dr. Natalie Kanem spoke about in her opening speech is acquired and exhibited to highlight the impact of colonization, enslavement, and the horrors associated with it including the resilience that people of African descent continue to overcome today as a result of the impact of this systemic structures on anti-black racism planted hundreds of years ago.

I call on all other art institutions to make similar commitments and grow their collection of artworks of African Descent.

Thank you.