



April 18, 2024

Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Third Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
Palais des Nations of the United Nations Office - Geneva, Switzerland

Re: Recommendation for the establishment of Canada's Special Envoy for the Black African Diaspora

Thank you, Madame Moderator, Madame Chair, and esteemed members of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, and to all my brother & sisters.

Today, I stand before you with a loving Muslim heart, as a proud daughter of African soil, and a survivor of colonization with a Canadian passport, and as the CEO of the BlackNorth Initiative. Our primary recommendation is to establish a Special Envoy for the Black African Diaspora in Canada to reflect the unwavering commitment to the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, reinforcing our global partnership in combating anti-Black racism and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Canada acknowledges its historical role in perpetuating injustices against people of African descent and the urgent need to confront the legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and enslavement that have disproportionately affected Black communities. By recognizing the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, Canada reaffirms its dedication to rectifying past wrongs and building a better future for Black communities worldwide. In Canada, we already have a special envoy for combatting antisemitism, special representative of islamophobia. But nothing for People of African Descent. We need a place where our rights are defended, and voices belong.

During the 3rd session on People of African Descent, many attendees called on all member states to support financially but as we ALL know, nothing about us has ever be done without us. At least not well. Civil society has always bridged the gaps left behind by our government.



The spirit of Ubuntu is the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others. Therefore, this permanent forum belongs to all of us and therefore means that we are all responsible for its success. Consequently, through this Envoy office we want to share our humanity.

This is why we propose establishing the office of the Special Envoy, which would enable us to share our financial resources with the Permanent Forum. Supported by Corporate Canada, this office would have the capability to contribute significant resources, funding, and capacity to the Permanent Forum. We have already earmarked \$2.5 million in funding and are continuing to fundraise. We believe that all Special Envoys could adopt this same model. **It always seems impossible until it's done by People of African Descent.**

The establishment of the Special Envoys will also serve as a central point of advocacy and action within Canada and on the international stage. We believe this role is crucial in mobilizing and standing on our own. The Special Envoy will serve as a catalyst for change, fostering healing, collaboration, and capacity building within the global Black African Diaspora. This initiative will enhance the efforts already underway, providing the needed capacity to support a wide range of global activities. Drawing from the successful BNI model, we aim to create a robust financial network, inclusive of corporations, independent financial actors, and global influencers, to fund initiatives that originate from the Black diaspora.

Our goal is to create a global network focused on independence, interdependence, and interchange. We seek to support African nations and Black communities in developing independent systems for innovation, entrepreneurship, housing and wealth generation. Additionally, this initiative will act as an incubator for best practices, harnessing and consolidating effective strategies into a document that can be shared globally.



Key objectives include convening an International Summit to address crucial issues facing the Black African Diaspora, developing a Pledge signed by participating nations to commit to tangible actions, and establishing a Working Group to evaluate progress and ensure accountability. The International Summit on Issues Facing the Black African Diaspora will be hosted initially by Canada and subsequently by participating nations. This Summit will culminate in a Pledge, signed by African nations and nations representing the Black African diaspora, committing to specific outcomes and approaches identified collaboratively. The summit will address key challenges faced by People of African descent such education, housing and economic empowerment.

The **Universal Declaration of People of African Descent** outlines key rights and freedoms for African descent communities, an agenda we are committed to advancing. By reinforcing and enhancing the Black global network the Special Envoy will draw attention to an ever emerging and developing resource filled diaspora, its global reach, and significant impact internationally. This will be achieved by promoting substantial, innovative, and sustainable benchmarks. The Special Envoy will foster an interdependent global framework for collaboration, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and strategic approaches that uplift people of African descent specifically while benefiting the worldwide economy generally.

Furthermore, we will establish a Working Group to evaluate progress on implementing the Summit Pledge, comprised of representatives from African nations, local knowledge keepers, and subject matter experts. The Special Envoy will do its utmost to advance the aims and aspirations of this Permanent Forum by engaging on issues that intersect with our combined objectives, thereby enhancing the forum's reach and solidifying its purpose globally.



Collaboration with the United Nations for the Decade for People of African Descent:

Global Perspective: The United Nations; involvement brings a global perspective to the challenges faced by people of African descent in Canada. Collaborating with the UN allows for the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned from other countries, facilitating more effective and informed policies and interventions.

International Human Rights Standards: The United Nations is at the forefront of promoting human rights and combating racial discrimination. Partnering with the UN ensures that Canada aligns its efforts with international human rights standards and obligations, as outlined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This collaboration strengthens the legitimacy and credibility of initiatives aimed at advancing the rights of people of African descent.

Sharing Expertise and Resources: The United Nations has a wealth of expertise and resources in addressing racial discrimination and promoting equality. Collaborating with the UN allows Canada to tap into these resources, benefiting from research, data, and technical assistance to develop evidence-based policies and programs that are tailored to the specific needs of people of African descent.

Visibility and Accountability: Partnering with the United Nations provides visibility and international accountability for Canada's efforts in promoting the rights of people of African descent. The Decade for People of African Descent, declared by the UN, emphasizes the importance of global recognition and action to address the historical and ongoing injustices faced by this community. Collaboration with the UN demonstrates Canada's commitment to this international initiative and its dedication to progress.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Black African Diaspora in Canada and in all nations who signed on to the decade. This would ensure a direct accountability relationship to the Permanent Forum.
2. The Permanent Forum to create the Permanent Forum Fund where all member states would contribute financially to ensure the true success of the 2nd decade.
3. Convening of an International Summit on Issues Facing the Black African Diaspora lead by the Permanent Forum with all Special Envoys globally.

We believe these recommendations would strategically address the historical injustices while building pathways towards economic and social justice. It's time for us to break down the systemic barriers, building global wealth, and create infrastructures that support and enhance the praise-worthy lives of People of African Descent.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Dahabo Ahmed-Omer
Chief Executive Officer
BlackNorth Initiative