

Comment by Cheryl Grills, Ph.D. to the United Nations  
Abbreviated Version for Verbal Comment  
Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (Geneva 4/16/24)

Thank you Madaam Chair.

I am [Dr. Cheryl Grills](#), a member of the California Reparations Task Force. My comments today are delivered in my role as a member of the Governing Council of the Global Pan African Movement (the GPAM) with its permanent secretariat in Kampala, Uganda.

Reparations must be understood as both a process and a set of outcomes that result in making our people and communities ‘whole again’. But considerable attention has been given to the “outcomes” associated with reparations –such as money paid, monuments built, apologies delivered, laws reformed, etc. This has been at the expense of attention to the “processes” taken to reach these outcomes. Lack of engagement can cause further harm, missed opportunities for true transformation, and dissatisfaction.

Although international legal standards generally recognize the right to victim participation in reparation programming, there are few international, or case-specific, recommendations on how to assure such participation entails *quality driven, meaningful processes*. The UN’s Basic Principles and Guidelines adopts an outcome-focused approach to evaluating reparations. No guidance is provided to define the participatory role of beneficiaries in applying these criteria. The only reference to process is in the preamble, which refers to the International Criminal Court’s mandate regarding reparations that permit the participation of victims at all stages determined to be appropriate by the Court but no methods or metrics for doing so are offered.

Situated in the history of Pan Africanism and institutionalized in The African Union “Agenda 2063”, The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, and The Durban Declaration we urge the Permanent Forum to undertake the following actions.

1. Create standards and measures of accountability that ensure meaningful participation of the intended beneficiaries including calls for reparations initiated by a nation state on behalf of its citizens and craft guard rails to protect the process from being overtaken by groups who claim authority to represent the people but who are advancing their own agenda and reparatory perspective.
2. Develop practice standards that ensure participation is more than “good practice” left up to the discretion of the reparatory body.
3. Design a framework for the evaluation of success of a reparatory process that includes metrics to determine its quality.
4. Establish an initiative that creates an ‘Encyclopedia of Crimes Against African Humanity’ detailing local, nation specific, regional, and global harms. This will help our communities across the diaspora construct a more humane narrative of who we are, what was done to us, how we responded, how we see ourselves and each other, how to chart a

way forward, and how to build and solidify a global Pan African movement of shared experiences, interests, collaboration, and solidarity.

5. Develop a position statement that emphasizes that reparations be conceived, devised, and implemented in an inclusive manner consistent with the philosophy of Pan Africanism. Extreme caution should be taken with artificial, and oppressor centered reparations eligibility criteria (i.e., who and who does not qualify). The statement should align with the [African Union Agenda 2063](#) and follow the Solemn Declaration which committed AU Member States to act in solidarity with African people in the Diaspora so that reparations is articulated as a broad-based trans-continental Pan African process that is able to think global, act local, and err on the side of inclusivity.
6. Inclusivity should ensure that reference to the AU designated 6<sup>th</sup> region, the African diaspora, clearly refer to African descendants of enslavement residing across Europe, North and South America, The Caribbean, and Asia and not to African voluntary emigrants residing outside of the continent.
7. Finally, the best way to kill a people is to dehumanize them....to make them into caricatures like the lazy slave, the heathen, apes, savages, etc. The Permanent Forum should center comprehensive healing initiatives that address multi-generational harms and this must be done through the prism of African and African-centered psychology, NOT Eurocentric psychology. Repair is about making us whole again materially, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Thank you.