



**Third session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent  
16-19 April 2024  
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland  
Concept Note**

The third session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent will be held at Palais de Nations, Geneva from 16 to 19 April 2024, with the theme: **The Second International Decade for People of African Descent: Addressing Systemic Racism, Reparatory Justice, and Sustainable Development.**

In December 2013, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015 to 2024 to be the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), with the theme “People of African descent: Recognition, Justice and Development.” As the International Decade is coming to an end, it is time to reflect on the achievements and shortcomings of the initiative, and to make recommendations on the tangible actions to be taken in the next 10 years. From the first two sessions, the members of the Permanent Forum have identified systemic racism, reparatory justice, and sustainable development as umbrella themes that should be explored as goals for the upcoming International Decade. This session will dive into what these would entail while looking into some specific issues that are integral to each theme and that add to the conversations of the first two sessions. It will also be a favourable occasion to deepen contributions toward the elaboration of a [Draft United Nations Declaration on the Promotion, Protection and full Respect of the Human Rights of People of African Descent](#). To that end, participants will have the opportunity to join four thematic discussions:

**Panel #1: Reparations, Sustainable Development & Economic Justice**

The panel will take place on Wednesday 17 April from 10:00 to 13:00.

The impact of colonialism, enslavement, trans-Atlantic, -Indian and -Pacific Ocean trade and trafficking of Africans, systemic and structural racism on people of African descent persists across the world. At the domestic and regional levels, people of African descent are overrepresented in poverty indicators and are often marginalized and disadvantaged in access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, markets, loans, and technology. Intergenerational poverty coupled with systemic and structural racism result in lack of land ownership, precarious work conditions, lower income, lower employment opportunities, limited progression in the labour market, restrictive access to entrepreneurship through purposefully restrictive administrative procedures, and exclusion from local bank and loan opportunities, among other issues. Women of African descent are often particularly vulnerable in the economy, making them more vulnerable to the lack of economic opportunities and autonomy, as well as restricted access to crucial economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance. At the international level, people of African descent in the Caribbean and elsewhere suffer from escalating environmental disasters, a structurally unequal global economy slanted towards the financial interests and consumption of developed countries, unsustainable national debts and loan conditions, unequal and not fully democratic international financial institutions, lack of equal sovereignty and self-determination in



international affairs, and a lack of political will to reduce inequities between developed and developing countries in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is in this context of addressing histories and legacies of colonialism, enslavement, systemic and structural racism, socio-economic hardship and sustainable development that reparations and reparatory justice will be discussed. This panel will also dive into digital divides, current obstacles to economic development as well as community-based initiatives for sustainable economic inclusion in an effort to share good practices and propose sustainable solutions.

### **Panel #2: Education: Overcoming Systemic Racism and Historic Harm**

The panel will take place on Wednesday 17 April from 15:00 to 18:00.

Education is a powerful tool to overcome racism. It can shape young minds to overcome racial prejudices and recognise human dignity and non-discrimination as basic societal values. It can bridge socioeconomic divides, help new generations step out of poverty, be resilient and empower them to lead flourishing lives.

In this regard educational institutions' curriculums need to have an accurate portrayal of Africa and people of African descent, of their histories and roles in society. Educational institutions also need to be accessible, inclusive and supportive of students of African descent. Systemic and structural racism remain a barrier to that ideal. Meanwhile, addressing the gaps in achieving SDG 4 on access to quality education for people of African descent will require more robust measures by Member States.

This panel will raise awareness on the barriers encountered by people of African descent in education and propose measures to promote respect, inclusion and flourishing for people of African descent in education. It will be an opportunity for the participants to share experiences and good practices in implementing or receiving a racially inclusive pedagogy and creating special measures for people of African descent in education.

### **Panel #3: Culture & Recognition**

The panel will take place on Thursday 18 April from 10:00 to 13:00.

People of African descent have rich and diverse cultures. Their histories, movements, customs, traditions, spiritualities, arts, intellectual contributions and languages have had and continue to have a great impact on societies. However, people of African descent receive limited recognition for their cultural diversity and contributions to society. Many of their African derived spiritualities are often demonized and at times even persecuted. Even more, migrants of African descent are sometimes seen as a threat to the cultural identity of their receiving countries. Recognition is a way to celebrate the cultural wealth of Africans and African descent communities; to foster the protection of their cultural heritages and their free expression; and to validate the substantial contributions of people of African descent to societies. This can help



societies become more inclusive and people of African descent build a positive sense of self and a sense of social belonging, which are essential elements for their psychological and emotional well-being.

This panel will aim at highlighting the rich and vibrant cultures of Africans and people of African descent, and the invaluable contributions of Africans and people of African descent to societies, communities, and movements around the world. It seeks to raise awareness on promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity, the ongoing struggles for the preservation of the cultural heritages, traditional knowledge systems and cultural lives of people of African descent. This panel will also discuss the crucial aspect of providing proper recognition to African and African descendent tradition-keepers, artists, musicians, writers etc., including the issue of cultural appropriation and restitution of looted artifacts.

#### **Panel #4: The Second International Decade for People of African Descent: Expectations and Challenges**

The panel will take place on Thursday 18 April from 15:00 to 18:00.

In December 2013, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015 to 2024 to be the International Decade for People of African Descent, with the theme “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development.” The Decade has played a crucial role in raising awareness about the historical and contemporary challenges faced by people of African descent and has served as a platform to acknowledge historical injustices and legacies. Some countries have taken significant steps in developing and implementing legislative measures, national action plans and other policies and programs to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent. The establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African descent, as well as the ongoing elaboration of the UN Declaration on the promotion, protection, and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent, have also been crucial achievements of the International Decade. However, shortcomings have been identified in the implementation of the Programme of Activities for International Decade. Racism and discrimination against people of African descent have been reported across the world in multiple forms. Disaggregated data remains uneven among countries and fails to fully capture the situations, experiences and needs of communities of African descent. Disproportionate killings in the context of encounters with law enforcement, continue to be reported at alarming rates. And the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened inequalities faced by people of African descent with a disproportionate impact on women, children, migrants and LGBTIQ+ persons. In this context, UN mechanisms, including the Permanent Forum, have called for a second International Decade with a view to taking further actions to bring about the full recognition, justice and development of people of African descent.

This panel discussion will aim at addressing the barriers and obstacles in the achievements of the programme of activities of the first International Decade, including by sharing good practices and lessons learned from this period. The panel will also highlight the focus of the upcoming International Decade, including the themes proposed by the Permanent Forum:



systemic racism, reparatory justice and sustainable development. Participants are welcome to make pledges for the second International Decade, and proposals for the elaboration of the draft programme of activities of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent.