

World Council of Churches submission to the WGEPAD 32nd Session

On

From Rhetoric to Reality: Reparatory Justice for People of African Descent (Thursday 4 May Item 6)

Thank you Madam Chair,

Allow me to congratulate the outgoing Chair of the Working Group as well as the new Chair. The World Council of Churches wishes to thank all members of the Working Group for the sterling work you have been doing over the years.

Madam Chair, the racist economic exploitation of People of African Descent has been going on for centuries. This exploitation has injured and killed People of African Descent; and, it is also a fact that each injury and death was actually producing profits for some people. Why then, must the victims and survivors of injury or damage beg for reparations?

Madam Chair, when someone is involved in a car accident, the only question is, "Who is culpable?" This is because reparations are a given, a right or an entitlement. This common sense approach to injury and reparation appears to be one that is evoking selective amnesia in critical institutions that are supposed to take the lead in this regard.

The World Council of Churches takes the question of reparations seriously and stands with People of African Descent in demanding reparations. The exploitation of People of African Descent was and remains corporate, over and above the individual experiences. From this perspective, we stand with the view that reparations will need to follow the same trajectory, that is, corporate, over and above individual culpability. We are aware that part of the contemporary economic imbalances in the world are a result of the racist exploitation visited on People of African Descent and benefitted all citizens of the exploiting countries whether they knew it or not.

We are fully aware that this stand means our member churches and other faith communities need to be more proactive in finding how they have been entangled with the racist economic exploitation of People of African Descent, including benefitting or profiting from resources that were unjustly expropriated from People of African Descent including land.

Madam Chair, the World Council of Churches calls on all State Actors to:

1. audit their own States for historic as well as contemporary injuries caused to People of African Descent
2. allow People of African Descent to bring to the table their own aspirations and expectations based on the injuries they have suffered
3. re-pay payments that were forcibly extracted from independent States governed by People of African Descent, we have here in mind the people of Haiti.
4. provide funding to bring to reality the aspirations of People of African Descent that will enable them to catch up with others in the community of nations
5. recover the memory of Black people living in Europe from the times of the ancient Roman Empire and deconstruct the idea that Black Europeans are a development of enslavement and colonisation

Madam Chair, the World Council of Churches assures you of our continued accompaniment and cooperation and we pray that you will also be our companion as we embark on this journey.

Thank you.