

Thank you, Madam Chair, my fellow panellists and those attending this panel.

The role of parliamentarians and the legislation they pass in reversing the barriers that generate debt, as well as the provision of social protection measures.

In post-colonial states, the legacy of colonialism has created enormous challenges for reversing barriers to poverty and colonial debt and providing social protection measures. Accordingly, parliamentarians must pass laws that acknowledge and address the historical and structural factors perpetuating poverty and indebtedness.

When dealing with the historical and structural factors, we see how the efforts of parliamentarians in the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have spearheaded a movement by African governments and other stakeholders to repatriate and reconstitute the countless stolen cultural artefacts.

In the case of Nigeria, between 3,000 and 5,000 "Benin Bronzes" artefacts were looted from the royal palace when the British launched an assault on Benin City, the capital of Benin Kingdom. These artefacts are of immeasurable financial and cultural value; therefore, if returned to Nigeria, today would restore some of the aid to reversing Nigeria's general debt. The Benin Bronzes subsequently passed through the hands of art dealers into private and public collections worldwide, explaining the involvement of various European countries in the discussions and attempts to repatriate them. For example, in 2018, the British Museum in London agreed to loan some of its Benin bronzes to a planned new museum in Benin City, Nigeria. The German Culture Ministry has also expressed willingness to discuss the repatriation of the country's Benin bronzes in 2019. Furthermore, on 2nd February 2023, the Swiss Benin Initiative, which comprises eight Swiss museums, the Nigerian government and some Swiss parliamentarians, agreed on the return of the looted hundred pieces of Benin Bronze artefacts held in Swiss museums to Benin, Nigeria.

Another example where parliamentarians have taken up the discourse on debt reduction through the reparation channel is the government of Barbados through the National Task Force on Reparations. As a CARICOM member, Barbados is part of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) and is a signatory party of the CARICOM 10-Point Reparations Plan. We see that Barbados' goal of having a Global Reparatory Agenda and a viable healing process is carefully strategised into

steps taken by the individual (parliamentarian-driven) and collective (CARICOM-driven) initiatives transformed into action and the achievement of reparatory justice.

On the continent of Africa, Namibia was one of the first African countries to address the issue of reparations for the injustices suffered by its people. Germany colonised Namibia in the late 19th century, during which the Herero and Nama peoples suffered injustices such as forced labour and genocide. In 2004, the Namibian government began negotiations with the German government about reparations for these historic crimes.

In 2015, the two governments reached an agreement in which Germany agreed to apologise for its colonial-era crimes and to provide \$1.3 billion in development aid over a 30-year period. However, some groups in Namibia have criticised the agreement as insufficient and have continued to advocate for further reparations.

It is important to note that because of the complexity and continuity of reparations issues, many African countries and communities continue to struggle with the legacy of historical injustices such as slavery and colonialism. This will be discussed in a later panel during this session.

Parliamentarians can also work internally within their States to enact social and economic development programs or laws such as land tenure, eliminate debt inherited from colonialism, and establish redistributive policies that address the vicious debt circle to ensure equitable access to resources.

South Africa is an excellent example of a country that has looked into its internal structure as part of its efforts to address the legacy of apartheid and provide redress to those harmed by it.

One of the ways it has done this is through the Land Restitution Program, which aims to restore land taken from communities during apartheid. Under this program, people can apply to have their land restored or receive compensation for land that cannot be restored. The Land Restitution Program was implemented in South Africa in 1994, shortly after the country's first democratic elections. The program was established under the Restitution of Land Rights Act, which allows individuals and communities forcibly removed from their land due to discriminatory laws between 1913 and 1994 to claim restitution or compensation for their land. The ongoing

program has resulted in the restoration of millions of hectares of land to previously disadvantaged communities.

Another program is the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy, which seeks to address the economic inequalities caused by apartheid by promoting the participation of black South Africans in the economy. This includes measures such as preferential procurement policies, training and support for black-owned businesses, and promoting black ownership of assets. The BEE policy was started in South Africa in 2003 under the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act. The South African government introduced the act to empower and promote the economic participation of previously disadvantaged black South Africans who were excluded from participating in the country's economy during apartheid. The BBBEE policy aims to advance black ownership and control of the economy and promotes the advancement of people of colour to leadership positions in the private and public sectors. The policy also incentivises companies to contribute to socio-economic development initiatives such as skills development, enterprise development, and job creation in disadvantaged communities. The BBBEE policy has undergone several revisions since its implementation in 2003, with the latest version coming into effect in 2019.

Parliamentarians can play a crucial role in reversing the barriers that generate debt and providing social protection measures for people of African descent. In the global north, people of African descent face various forms of discrimination and disadvantage, which impact their economic stability and access to social protection measures.

Parliamentarians can contribute to reversing these barriers by:

1. Addressing structural racism: Parliamentarians can advocate for measures to address the structural racism that leads to discrimination and exclusion of people of African descent in the workforce, education, and social services. For example, in Switzerland, we currently have an exhibition in the city hall of Zürich – called Zürich and Colonialism that also depicts racial stereotypes and their repercussion.

2. Supporting entrepreneurship: Parliamentarians can support entrepreneurship programs for people of African descent, creating opportunities for them to establish businesses and build economic stability.

3. Investing in education and training: Parliamentarians can push for increased investment in education and training for people of African descent to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to access higher-paying jobs and become self-sufficient. Affirmative action, teaching our histories in schools.

4. Protecting workers' rights: Parliamentarians can advocate for workers' rights and push against unfair labour practices such as wage theft and lack of access to benefits.

5. Ensuring social protection measures: Parliamentarians can work to ensure that social protection measures are in place for people of African descent, such as access to healthcare, affordable housing, and other forms of assistance.

In summary, parliamentarians can significantly impact reversing the barriers that generate generational debt and increasing access to social protection measures for people of African descent by implementing legislations that address structural racism, support entrepreneurship, invest in education and training, protect workers' rights, and ensuring social protection measures for people of African descent.