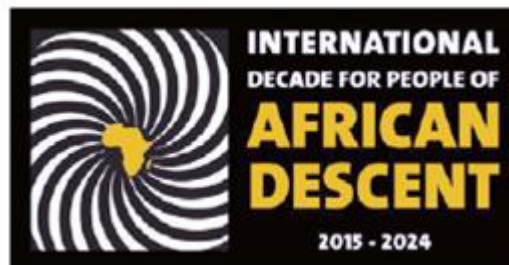


**Statement by**

**Dr. Barryl A. Biekman**

**Civil Society Speaker**

**Launching International Decade for People of  
African descent**



**United Nations  
New York  
December, 10, 2014**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Honoured Guests, Representatives of the African Families and Civil Society,

I bring you greetings from the members of Tiye International, The African European Women ' s ' Movement "Sophiedela", the Platform of the Dutch Slavery Past, the Global Coalition for the International Decade for People of African descent<sup>1</sup> and the world wide Civil Society grassroots African families on this historical moment of the launching of the International Decade for People of African descent.

Mr. President,

We support the International Decade for People of African descent and it's Mandate to follow the recommendations pertaining to the DDPA from the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR), as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

It must be reminded here that the decision to have the International Decade did not come as a gift from heaven. It came only because of a long struggle by Pan Africanist supported by those civil society organizations who were committed to the implementation of the DDPA and finally because of the hard working involvement of the Working Group of Experts on People of African descent, not to forget the support of the African Group and the great majority of member states of the United Nations. A special thanks therefore goes to the African countries for their role in defending the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to the African Union to declare African Diaspora worldwide family as their 6<sup>th</sup> region.

The launching of the Decade today is a great victory for the cause of justice with the strong reaffirmation of and call for the full and effective implementation of the DDPA. We hope that the implementation of the Decade should put a final end to the opposition against, undermining of and false promotion regarding the Durban follow-up process which we have regularly witnessed since the successful World Conference Against Racism in 2001.

At the center of the demands during the World Conference Against Racism, by African people and in diaspora under the leadership of the 12th December Reparation Movement and many other Pan African Reparation Coalitions, was the declaration of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism and apartheid as crimes against humanity. In fact it was the longest and most depraved crime against humanity ever.. which lasted for more than three centuries as had been declared by the United Nations including the republic Suriname by its Permanent Delegation, ambassador Udenhout in 2001. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism and apartheid destroyed the development of Africa and enriched Europe and the European colonists in the Americas. It established the system of racism & racial discrimination, to be specific Afrophobia, that effects and has its impact what the African people and in diaspora experience until today.

Mr. President

Really, we have reasons to be glad with the establishment of the Decade. But we have reasons to be disappointed too. Because despite of the adoption of the Programme of Activities by the General Assembly last month, powerful State actors, including those who boycotted the 2009 Durban Review Conference and the 2011 commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Coalition for the International Decade for People of African Descent is established to provide global peoples activism and support for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent as proclaimed by the United Nations for the period 2015-2024 based on the principles of Recognition, Justice and Development.

of the DDPA, continue their efforts to render the DDPA impotent. We deplore the 9 votes cast against and 42 abstentions cast, but salute the 121 votes in favor of the resolution on actions against racism and comprehensive implementation of the DDPA, which the third committee of the General Assembly approved on November 26nd. At the same time we are bewildered that abstaining countries succeeded to delete a paragraph from the G77 draft resolution, which had the support of the majority of countries and which stated: "Commends the constructive role played by non-governmental organizations in participating in the Durban follow-up mechanisms and the Human Rights Council, which has greatly contributed to the development of the Programme of Activities and the preparation for the International Decade."

Mr. President Truth has the inherent power to produce the promised effects.

The full and irrevocable recognition by all countries that the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism and apartheid was a crime against humanity is necessary for the credibility of the Decade. Without that we have reason to doubt the sincerity of states to restore the rights of people of African descent during the Decade. It is why I on behalf of the African descent worldwide families challenge all national state parliaments and governments to officially recognize and declare the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity as some countries have already done. We call on all the countries who organized, participated in and profited from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the hard slave labour by the kidnapped African ancestors to present their sincere apologies as the first step and I challenge all governments and parliaments concerned, to act on this urgent matter.

We strongly welcome the efforts by Caribbean governments & states to place the issue of Reparations on the International Agenda. For the African descendants families the adopted theme of the Decade, "Recognition, Justice, Development", is for us synonymous with the Repairing of the damage, which must become the overall concept of the Decade. Reparations is not limited to material repair, but something more fundamental relating to restoring every aspect of the rights of people of African descent.

Mr. President,

We therefore invite all Member States, as proposed by the Global Coalition for the International Decade for People of African Descent, to recognize and honour the Decade as the "Reparation Decade".

We believe that the right of People of African descent to learn about their rights as enshrined in the DDPA and other Human Rights instruments must be assured during the Decade. The Decade must become a framework to address the concentration of misery and disadvantages which people of African descent face everywhere they live: poverty, racial discrimination and lack of access to human rights & their institutions, high rates of unemployment and imprisonment, vulnerability to violence and lack of access to justice, lack of access to good education, healthcare, housing, multiple forms of discrimination, and political and economic marginalization and stigmatization.

As educators and scholars across the racial divide agree that (a) the primary purpose of education is to uplift and enhance the lives of all individuals (b) it must be the right type of education that engenders positive identity, self-esteem, self-confidence including love, respect and appreciation for one's history and culture. We therefore call for adapting both formal and informal education for students of African descent and others so that that it no longer marginalizes and relegates Africa and Africans to periphery of anything important, but for most that our next African generations can say: "I'm not afraid, because of the color of my skin, to be an African...., I'm proud to be an African.....".

Mr. President,

We have seen the situation faced by people of African descent around the world grow more and more precarious.. and we seek urgent and concrete results from the International Decade. African Diaspora Civil Society grassroots organizations cannot afford to leave any members of the African Diaspora and African Civil Society around the world behind. Every forum, every workshop, every review and assessment, every planning session and every on-the-ground implementation project must closely involve representatives from Civil Society and the grassroots communities. And we cannot stress enough the importance of always including women, girls and young male adults, the future generation, on an equal basis. To leave them behind would be as to leave our hearts and souls, our very selves, behind as well.

When an African American man is strangled to death by the police on the streets of New York we the people of African descent feel the same that we cannot breathe. We add our voices in solidarity with all those demonstrating to demand justice for the victims of racially based police brutality. This situation makes it clear that institutionalized racism is still alive and that the campaigns against all forms of multiple racism & racial profiling as well the symbolic & psychological violence situation in different countries must be intensified. Whether the ' Black Pete figure ' in the yearly Dutch Santa Claus culture historical tradition is just a problem in the Netherlands because of the revival of stereotype of African (black) people or interlinked to similar historical cultural tradition, stereotypical language like some people continue to call us 'nigger' & racist situations in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world.

Mr. President

On behalf of the world wide African diaspora families I invite all of you to join hands with us for the implementation of the Programme of Activities in the spirit of "Recognition, Justice and Development." Because this Decade requires the committed support and involvement of all: international, regional, national, sectors of society, stakeholders and people of good will in the world.

I invite you all to make this "Reparation Decade" a great success.

I thank you Mr. President