

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

[delivered by Ms. Valerie Amos, Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs]

I am very pleased to be here, on Human Rights Day, to launch the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Across the globe, Africans and the African diaspora continue to suffer inequality and disadvantage because of the legacy of slavery and colonialism. Freedom from violence, prejudice and discrimination are a distant dream for many.

People of African descent are amongst the poorest and most marginalized communities around the world. They have high rates of mortality and maternal deaths, and limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social security. They may experience discrimination in their access to justice, and they face alarmingly high rates of police violence and racial profiling.

We all need to do more to ensure fairness in justice and law enforcement systems and to promote and uphold the human rights of people of African descent everywhere.

This decade is an opportunity for focused and concerted action. My hope is that a decade from now, the human rights situation of people of African descent worldwide will be vastly improved.

The entire United Nations system will participate in the Decade's activities, from human rights bodies to specialized agencies, funds and programmes. I encourage everyone to develop and implement creative initiatives that will make a concrete difference to people's lives.

I count on all Member States to remain engaged and committed to the Decade, at the local, national, regional and international levels. I am pleased to see that some have already allocated funds for their activities.

I wish everyone around the world all the best on Human Rights Day. We must never forget that human rights are for everyone, every minute of every day, 365 days a year, without distinction of any kind – wherever we live, whoever we are, irrespective of our opinions, ethnic origin, skin colour, sexual orientation, or any other status.

Thank you.