



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

31 October 2014

Excellency,

I refer to resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013 by which the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent, commencing on 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2024, with the theme “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”.

In accordance with the aforementioned resolution, I have the honour to inform that I will launch the International Decade for People of African Descent at an event to be convened on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014 at 3:00 p.m. at the Trusteeship Council Chamber. A Concept Note and Provisional Programme for the Launch are included herewith for your reference. A more detailed Final Programme will be circulated in due course.

Delegations are invited to be represented at the highest possible level at the Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', written in a cursive style.

Sam K. Kutesa

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

CONCEPT NOTE

Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent

10 December 2014

3:00 p.m.

Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations

Background

The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was a historic opportunity to acknowledge the burdens faced by people of African descent as a result of the legacies of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism. Despite efforts to mobilize political will at the national, regional and international levels, thirteen years after the World Conference against Racism and the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the discrimination faced by people of African Descent continues to manifest in situations of limited access to quality education, employment, security and vulnerability to violence based on colour or ethnicity.

Non-discrimination and equality before and of the law constitute fundamental principles of international human rights law, and underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the main international human rights treaties and instruments. Accordingly, in the face of the realities of racism and structural and institutional discrimination against people of African descent, the international community has declared the promotion and protection of the human rights of people of African descent to be a matter of priority concern.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent with the aim of strengthening national actions and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African descent in relation to their full enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights; their participation and integration in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society; and the promotion of a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture.

Following on the International Year, the General Assembly, by its resolution 68/237 of 23 December 2013, proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent commencing 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2024, with the theme "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development".

Objective

The main objective of the International Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Decade shall focus on the following objectives:

- a. To strengthen national, regional and international action and cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- b. To promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- c. To adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

The International Decade is a timely and important initiative and a unique opportunity to underline the significant contribution made by people of African descent to our societies and to propose concrete measures to promote their full inclusion and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The International Decade will enable the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development. The programme of activities recognizes that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is a comprehensive United Nations framework and a solid foundation for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and represent a new stage in the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to restore the rights and dignity of people of African descent.

The United Nations Department of Public Information manages a programme of education outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery to increase awareness of and educate future generations about the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice. The educational programme is also used to enhance awareness of the Permanent Memorial at United Nations Headquarters to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Slave Route Project celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2014. Activities developed by both programmes could also be used to raise awareness and provide a framework for activities organized in support of the International Decade.

Format

The President of the 69th session of the General Assembly will preside over the official Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent at an event to be held at the United Nations on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014 at 3:00 p.m.

The Launch will include brief remarks from the President of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, The Director-General of UNESCO, the Chairperson of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the coordinators of major groups represented at the United Nations have also been invited to present remarks, not exceeding ten minutes. There will also be a featured speaker and musical performances.

Participation

Member States and Observers are encouraged to be represented at the highest possible level. United Nations entities, intergovernmental, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant stakeholders are invited also to be present at the highest possible level.

Website and Media

Website

The website for the International Decade is being developed by the Department of Public Information (DPI) and is expected to be launched in early December prior to the formal launch of the Decade.

Media

A media advisory, highlighting the details of the programme will be issued ahead of the event. A press conference will be held on the day of the launch, and a press release will be issued.

Social Media

A social media campaign will be conducted through the various UN institutional accounts to promote the launch of the Decade and raise awareness on the struggles and contributions of People of African Descent, as well as the objectives of the Decade.

UN Information Centres

UN Information Centres and Offices worldwide will be requested to undertake promotional and public awareness activities focusing on the objectives of the Decade and the role of Member States in their implementation.

Provisional Programme

Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent

10 December 2014

3:00 p.m.

Trusteeship Council Chamber

<p>3:00 p.m.</p> <p>3:10 p.m.</p>	<p><u>Musical introduction</u></p> <p><u>Remarks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly• H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (TBC)• H.E. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights• H.E. Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (TBC)• Ms. Mireille Fanon-Mendes, Chairperson, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent• Mr. Mohamed Siad Douale, Chairperson, Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action• Civil society representative (TBC)• Featured speaker (TBC)• Major group statements<ul style="list-style-type: none">- African Group- CARICOM- EU- G77 and China• Representative of the United States (TBC)• Representative of South Africa• Representative of Brazil
<p>5:45 p.m.</p> <p>5:55 p.m.</p>	<p><u>Musical finale</u></p> <p><u>Closure of Launch</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Sam K. Kutesa