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Bayete

You Highness, Your Majesties, Your Excellencies

All Protocols observed.

Very warm royal greetings to everyone. Let me first offer a deep apology on behalf of Professor Sir Hilary Beckles (HRH Papa Osikol II) who has expressed his immense regret that he is unable to join us today at this Convention, due to illness. He gave a really moving presentation at the Fourth Annual Convention in Atlanta and an inspiring one during the Reparations and Royalty Symposium in Jamaica in March and was so pleased to host the African royal delegation in Jamaica.

Since 2018, after Professor Beckles went to an International Colloquium on Reparations in Benin, on his return he conveyed to the CRC that he would like to bring a delegation of African Kings and Queens to the Caribbean. From then on it remained an aspiration of the CARICOM Reparations Commission until 2022 when through Chief Samson Esudu, we were introduced to His Highness Paul Jones Eganda and the AIDO Network. And in just over a year we have become family; we have welcomed African traditional leaders in Guyana, Antigua and Jamaica and now here we are making another profound step in that journey of reconnection and have returned home to Kenya. I know this is an emotional and moving time for many of us and will be among our most cherished memories. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has made this possible. We have always known that Africa is in us, it defines who we are and what we aspire to be and we have never forgotten that our roots are right here in Africa. Emuria kolia.

It was indeed a watershed moment in 2013 when the Heads of Government of CARICOM took the historic decision to pursue Europe for reparations on behalf of the people of the Caribbean, for the crimes against humanity committed, which are indisputable: over 150 years of European inflicted genocide on the indigenous people of the Caribbean, 300 years of the trade in enslaved Africans, chattel enslavement in the Caribbean, deceptive indentureship of East Indian and Chinese migrants, and then another hundred years of debilitating colonialism which consolidated race and identity as the basis for social status, wealth, and the enjoyment of basic human rights.

I think most of us are aware of the brutality of the slave trade – the capture in Africa, months in one of the dungeons on the coast of Africa; six to eight weeks in the sweltering cramped hold of

a ship crossing the Atlantic, where the captured Africans were thrown to the sharks if supplies were low, if there was an outbreak of disease or there was too much resistance.. Mortality rates on the slave ships were typically upwards of 50%; notorious examples are the San Michel which in 1792 landed in Jamaica with a mortality rate of 96%, and the Zong which in 1781 had a 53% mortality rate; some 130 Africans were thrown overboard.

And then there was the genocidal policy of chattel enslavement in the Caribbean and the Americas:

- Genocidal policy against indigenous people meant that the population of 3 Million Indigenous people in the Caribbean in 1700 was reduced to 30,000 by the year 2000 (10% survival rate)
- Caribbean historians estimate that 12 -15 million Africans were trafficked from Africa to the Americas, 46% of whom went to Brazil. Some 3.2 million Africans were trafficked to the British Caribbean from 1662 – and only 700,000 remained at Emancipation in 1834 (a survival rate of 25%)
- Critically, The ideology of anti-black racism and the practice of institutional racism were developed, expanded and entrenched across Europe and the Americas through slavery, first by using race as the prism through which to determine fundamental rights to freedom, life, equality, humanity, self-determination, wealth accumulation, education and so on. The ideology of racism and the articulation of superiority and inferiority linked to race and colour were absent in Africa before the trans-Atlantic trade in Africans.
- Chattel meant that Africans were treated as property and denied the essence of their humanity. Africans could be bought, sold and inherited; sexual exploitation of both men and women was a daily occurrence and it was enshrined in law that Africans were not considered human beings and not allowed to practice language, religion, culture or even enjoy the right to your African name. The lifespan of an enslaved person was 10 years – they were literally worked to death and replaced.

This 21st century political and human rights movement for reparatory justice is therefore the justifiable response to the gross violations of human rights, nationhood, self determination and other atrocities experienced by the victims and their descendants of African enslavement.

The debt has not yet been paid for systemic exploitation, extraction of wealth, pain and suffering, psychological harm, leading to persistent poverty in the Caribbean and in Africa up until today. In order to address this history of exploitation - a reality shared in the United States after hundreds of years of African enslavement, the Jim Crow era and segregationist laws and racial discrimination against African Americans and Indigenous peoples – the descendants of the victims have issued a strident call for reparations or repair, for restitution, compensation, satisfaction, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition.

It is for this reason that the CARICOM Heads of Government established the CARICOM Reparations Commission in 2013 with the Chairpersons of national reparations committees, which are currently operational in 11 of the 14 independent Member States. The UWI was also a founding member of the Commission. This action by governments was a long time in coming, building on a long standing tradition of activism by Rastafarai and other pan-Africanists. The CRC can be said to have re-energised or inspired the renaissance of a global movement for reparatory justice, and has been providing intellectual leadership and advocacy on this issue. Gradually there has been acknowledgement of the need for structural transformation of the world economy, social and economic justice, the dismantling of structural racism, and redress for systemic injustices and underdevelopment. Reparations is a rallying cry and call to action globally to restore the dignity of the victims and their descendants and to fight against racism and inequality – which prevent Africans from enjoying the full complement of their human rights. Monetary compensation, is but one component of repair which should begin with an apology and a commitment to repair the damage across multiple social, economic and cultural dimensions, consistent with the CRC Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice.

The Ten Point Plan is a respected conceptual and actionable framework for reparations based on a collective, developmental approach (not individual payouts). The UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent at its inaugural meeting in Geneva in December 2022, expressed support for the CARICOM Ten Point Plan and called for its adoption globally. The CRC through its symposia, public lectures, publications, media engagement and outreach programmes has increased knowledge and understanding and raised consciousness about the yet unpaid debt that is owed to the Caribbean and the descendants of the enslaved.

It can be said that 2020 was a watershed year for the reparations agenda, marked by the killing of George Floyd in the United States, that ushered in a new phase in the movement globally. The protests against racism that were ignited in major cities across the globe and which included the tearing down of statues glorifying slave traders and colonizers, served as catalyst for deeper investigations into the historical links with slavery of an increasing number of academic institutions, churches, private corporations and affluent families. This major trend has seen acknowledgements and apologies from elite universities on both sides of the Atlantic, from private corporations such as Lloyds of London, Greene King, the Banks of England and Scotland, the Church of England and lately from wealthy families.

Other significant recent developments have been the apology for slavery issued by His Excellency Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands on 19 December 2022; the apology issued by the influential British Trevelyan family in Grenada in February 2023 for the family's

enrichment from slavery, and the launch a reparations fund with an initial contribution of £100,000; and the establishment of the Heirs of Slavery group formed in April 2023 (led by the Trevelyan family) comprising wealthy influential families in Britain whose ancestors profited from the enslavement of Africans and who intend to lobby the British government to provide reparatory justice for the Caribbean.

However, I would like to turn our attention to the pivotal role that Africa plays in this conversation - in this human rights movement that has gained much traction in the 21st century. The Heads of State and Government of Member States of the African Union (AU) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) met virtually on 7 September 2021 for the inaugural Africa-CARICOM Summit, hosted by then President of the Republic of Kenya His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta.

The **theme of the Summit** was ***“Unity across continents and oceans: opportunities for deepening integration.”*** The objective of this historic Summit was to reaffirm the bonds of ancestry and friendship between Africa and CARICOM and to build a foundation for lasting robust socio-economic and political engagements as well as partnerships between the two regions for a collective prosperous future. This was followed by the AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum held in Barbados 1-3 September, 2022. These initiatives along with the designation of the African Diaspora as the Sixth region of Africa and the International Decade for People of African Descent, are relevant parts of the context and background to the collaboration and discussion we’re having today in this Convention.

However, the ground work for the reparations movement was laid long ago and in collaboration with forward thinking activists and intellectuals in Africa. The current phase of CARICOM’s historic call for reparations derived energy and inspiration from the staging of the First International Conference on Reparations in Lagos, Nigeria in 1990. This effort was pioneered by the late Chief Moshood Abiola of Nigeria and the late Ambassador Dudley Thompson of Jamaica.

This led the then Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) to establish a Group of Eminent Persons on Reparations which included South African singer and human rights activist – Miriam Makeba and to stage its First Pan-African Conference On Reparations in 1993 – an historic Summit that culminated with the issuing of the Abuja Declaration. The Declaration called for the paying of reparations to Africa and her diaspora ‘for damages done because of enslavement, colonization, and neo-colonialism’. The proclamation issued a demand for compensation – in the form of capital transfer and debt cancellation and the return of ‘stolen goods, artefacts, and other traditional treasures and a reordering of international relations to give Africa more representation in the highest international decision-making bodies and, in particular, a permanent seat on the United Nations’ Security Council. Chief Abiola is quoted as saying: ‘Our demand for reparations is based on the tripod of moral, historic, and legal arguments...who knows what path Africa’s social development would have taken if our great centres of

civilization had not been razed in search of human cargo? Who knows how our economies would have developed...?’

In Durban, during the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (UNWCAR), we saw the divide and rule principle at play, where Africa’s government representatives buckled under the pressure of the Western nations and did not vote with the Caribbean on the text of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action that confirmed *inter alia* that the European orchestrated trans-Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery were “crimes against humanity”; from which Africans and African descendants continue to suffer from, up to the present day. This must never and will never happen again if we are committed to the unifying concept of a “Global Africa” which is incorporated in our theme for today – “Advancing a Human Rights Agenda for Global Africa.”

The term ‘global Africa’ has been defined and is gaining prominence – through the work and words of Kenyan social scientist Ali Mazuri who claimed: *‘We define Global Africa as the continent of Africa plus the Diaspora of enslavement (descendants of survivors of the Middle Passage) and the Diaspora of colonialism (the dispersal of Africans which continues to occur as a result of colonization and its aftermath).’*

Speaking at the Reparations and Racial Healing Summit in August 2022 in Ghana, President Akufo-Addo expressed the view that reparations to Africa and the African diaspora were long overdue and the call needed to be intensified. He said that the entire continent of Africa deserves an apology from Europe for the crimes and damage caused to the population, psyche, image and character of the African the world over.

But with respect to our traditional leaders, or royal families, Papa Osikol II had some special reflections on their role in this movement for reparatory justice. In Atlanta at the Fourth Annual Convention, he said:

“Today, we are speaking about the return of our Royals, the return of our Royals to the center stage, to the center stage of our history. Because there is a great role and mission for them.” He pointed out that the royal families were specifically targeted by the European powers in their quest to conquer Africa, because the Europeans knew that once they had broken and destroyed the royal families and the communities were scattered, they would fall victims to the slave trade.

Instructions were therefore given by the British government to the military garrison, Elmina fort, to eliminate kings or royals standing in the way of the slave trade. Several African kings were therefore assassinated and many kingdoms were destroyed. The story of Africa’s resistance to the trade in enslaved Africans has not been told and amplified in the way it should, and there are many stories of strong resistance by the kings and queens and communities in Africa;

notably King Alfonso of the Congo and Queen Anna Nzinga Mbande of Angola (1581-1663) who was legendary in her fight against the Portuguese slavers.

Although there were some kingdoms that profited from the heinous trade, they were in the minority. It was European nations that conceived of the trade, financed the enterprise, controlled its operation, and were significantly enriched by it.

In Jamaica in February 2023 at the *Reparations and Royalty, Africa and Europe: Exploding Myths and Empowering Truths Symposium*, in which several members of the AIDO Royal Community participated, Papa Osikol II underscored that “No group of people has been more denigrated by the historians of Europe than the Kings and Queens and nobles of Africa within the context of colonization,” but he also pointed out that the royal family tradition in Africa has endured because the vast majority resisted and tried to protect their people. He concluded by saying “We must empower them. We must amplify their voices. And we must bring them back to the center of our global history. Their people are scattered and we wish to hear their voices speaking for us, for all of us as Global Africa.”

The CRC is very appreciative of the partnership that we have been developing with our traditional leaders through AIDO, which we feel is indeed putting our traditional leaders back at the centre of the development of Global Africa. I thank our AIDO royal community, through his Highness Paul Jones Eganda for conveying to King Charles’ advisors recently that reparations for Africans is an area of concern and top priority to our traditional leaders. King Tanyi and others are on board and already advocating in various channels. We are so grateful for your love and support.

Yesterday 25 May was Africa Liberation Day, founded in 1958 by Kwame Nkrumah on the occasion of the First Conference of Independent States held in Ghana. This year the theme is “Imperialism and Neo-colonialism must be destroyed.” And we are now coming to the end of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) with the theme “Recognition, Justice and Development.”

My brothers and sisters of Africa, those gathered here in Mombasa and who are joining us online, the time has come for Africa and her diaspora to speak with one voice to advance Africa’s liberation from neo-colonialism and racism. It is time we speak with one voice to call for complete respect for the human rights of African people. We must stand together and issue a strong call for the observance of a Second International Decade for People of African Descent and it is time that Africa and her diaspora come together with firm resolve to claim our right to reparatory justice.

Bayete. Bayete. Emuria Kolia. Ateker Cobusi!