

PRESS RELEASE

CIDO and the UNOHCHR held a joint Continental Symposium on the Decade for People of African Descent in Accra, Ghana.



18 – 20 September 2018 – Accra, Ghana – The directorate of the Citizens and Diaspora organizations (CIDO) of the African Union Commission and the United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR met in Accra, Ghana alongside a number of Member states, Civil society organizations and Diaspora organizations, to celebrate the Decade for People of African Descent.

Throughout history, Africans and people of African descent have been on the end of social injustices, racism and other forms of discrimination. Therefore, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in November 2014 to implement the decade which runs from 2015 -2024. In his opening remarks, CIDO Director, Mr. Ahmed El-Basheer recognizes that “the International Decade for People of African Descent has been launched at a critical time in the history of Africans and Afro-Descendants around the world, where our community continues to live in conditions that are marked by disadvantage at all levels.” He recalled the Durban Declaration and Program of Action which make it clear that people of African descent were victims of slavery and colonialism and continue to be victims of the consequences of these historical atrocities. It is this marginalization and victimization of Africans and people of African descent thus led to the declaration of the Decade for People of African descent.

The decade recognizes that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. This is defined through three main pillars; Recognition, Justice and Development. Idrissa Kane of OHCHR revealed that the decade is not in place solely to realize the economic, social and civil equality for people of African descent but also for the people to be recognized, treated justly and to have a fair chance at education and development.

The main objective of the symposium was to understand and analyze how the decade could be better popularized and implemented. The symposium was divided into three main sections – understanding the decade, a panel discussion on national, regional and global action towards

implementing the decade and small working groups on the roles different Civil Society and Diaspora organizations could play in implementing the decade.

In understanding the importance of the decade the African Union's Deputy Chairperson, H.E. Kwesi gave a presentation on the Slave trade; the source of pain and tragedy that shaped Africa forever. He touched on the right for reparation and repatriation and compared the historical Diaspora to a lost son coming home. He, also condemned the false narrative that Africans willingly sold their brothers and sisters into slavery which has caused a rift between Africans on the continent and those outside.

The symposium agreed on a series of events which will be held jointly between the AU and UN for the years 2018-2019. These events will amongst other things will underscore 1) the importance of countries globally Eliminating discrimination and racial profiling as well as ensuring access to fair justice and equality before the law; 2) Adopt measures allowing people of African descent to access social, economic, civic and cultural rights as well as full participation in aspects of society; and 3) the important role of Regional, international and civil society organizations play to innovate projects and programs aimed at defeating racism and discrimination against people of African descent. Together the outcomes of the events will feed into the midterm evaluation of the decade taking place in 2020.

The symposium concluded with a field visit to one of the renowned slave trade ports in West Africa; the former slave fort and UN world heritage site, the Cape Coast Castle. The tour was an emotional journey through history, depicting the inhumane treatment that the slaves had to endure before walking through the 'door of no return', which after they were loaded into ships that sailed across the Atlantic ocean before being sold in the Americas and the Caribbean. For many, the door of no return was the last thing they saw before departing African shores forever.



"In Everlasting Memory of the anguish of our ancestors, may those who died rest in peace. May those who return find their roots. May humanity never again perpetrate such injustice against humanity. We the living vow to uphold this."