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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and
related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and
implementation of the Durban Declaration and
Programme of Action**

Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers through transformative change for racial justice and equality

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/21, in the present report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights examines calls for reparatory justice presented in his agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, building on recommendations by the Secretary-General and United Nations human rights mechanisms.

The High Commissioner highlights the role of States and others in confronting legacies of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism, including dismantling structures and systems that perpetuate systemic racism at all levels. The High Commissioner reaffirms that reparatory justice requires a multi-pronged approach that is context-specific, intersectional, grounded in international human rights law and designed through meaningful consultation with and the participation of people of African descent. Building a reparatory justice momentum requires mobilizing all of society, the creation and reinforcement of existing networks and solidarity across equality movements.

The High Commissioner calls for renewed leadership and vision, through creative, effective and comprehensive reparatory justice responses, as a critical component of dismantling systemic racism.

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I. Introduction

1. The report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/21. It builds upon advocacy and previous reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in which the Commissioner called for reparatory justice for legacies of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans, colonialism and successive racially discriminatory policies and systems, as well as the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality and recommendations by the Secretary-General and United Nations human rights mechanisms.¹

2. The report was informed by 28 contributions received in response to a call for submissions,² and consultations with approximately 200 individuals since 2021, mostly people of African descent, from more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and North America. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) thanks those who submitted information and participated in consultations.

II. Reparatory justice: a framework for transformative change for racial justice and equality

3. Reparatory justice for legacies of the past is key to dismantling systemic racism, transforming the present and future for Africans and people of African descent and answering calls for accountability and redress. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action – acknowledging that Africans and people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism, and continue to be victims of their consequences – was key to elevating those demands globally. It also acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade.³

4. In his 2021 report, the High Commissioner found that no State had comprehensively accounted for the past or for the current impact of systemic racism; and that behind the current systemic racism, racial violence, dehumanization and exclusion lay the lack of a formal acknowledgement of the responsibilities of States and others that had engaged in or profited from, and that continued to profit from, the legacy of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism.⁴ In the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality, the High Commissioner put forward recommendations for a multi-pronged and comprehensive approach, grounded in international human rights law and the right to adequate, effective and prompt reparation.⁵

5. United Nations human rights mechanisms have increasingly focused on reparatory justice, namely: engaging in public dialogue; reviewing educational materials, monuments, memorials and markers; marking the positive contributions of people of African descent; issuing apologies; developing durable employment opportunities; dismantling the denialist narrative around colonialism; establishing truth commissions; and ensuring full and meaningful consultation with people of African descent.⁶ They have also called for reparatory justice to be included in the draft United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect

¹ A/78/317, A/HRC/47/53, A/HRC/51/53, A/HRC/54/66 and A/HRC/57/67. See also the conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers, available on the OHCHR website, at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/A_HRC_47_CRP_1.pdf.

² See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-2025-report-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-human-rights-council>.

³ Durban Declaration, para. 14.

⁴ A/HRC/47/53.

⁵ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/racism/agenda-towards-transformative-change-racial-justice-and-equality>.

⁶ For example, the conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent, A/HRC/51/54/Add.2, A/HRC/54/67/Add.1 and A/HRC/57/71/Add.2.

of the human rights of people of African descent.⁷ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is drafting a general recommendation regarding reparations for the historical injustices from the chattel enslavement of Africans, and the ensuing harms and crimes to people of African descent.

6. Demand continues to grow for States and other stakeholders to acknowledge and repair the lingering impact of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans, colonialism and successive racially discriminatory policies and systems. National processes should be complemented by initiatives involving inter-State, cross-boundary dialogue and cooperation, including with affected communities in former colonies, reflecting the fact that – as noted by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance – slavery and colonialism were global projects, and reparations for both require global intervention.⁸

7. Existing initiatives carried out by States, business enterprises, religious groups, universities and individuals – as detailed in previous reports of the High Commissioner – indicate an increasing willingness and emerging practice to acknowledge the need to repair the continuing impacts of the past. Additional illustrative examples are contained in the present report.

8. In the following section, the High Commissioner considers the elements of reparatory justice and the role of States, together with cross-cutting guidance. The role of other stakeholders is presented in section IV. In section V, the High Commissioner outlines broader structural and systemic issues for further consideration.

III. Reparatory justice – the role of States

9. As primary duty bearers to eliminate racial discrimination, the High Commissioner has urged States to initiate a comprehensive approach to repair the legacies of the past through a plurality of measures, including through formal apologies, truth-telling processes and reparations in various forms.⁹ Given the magnitude and seriousness of the violations, the collective suffering and the intergenerational transmission thereof, measures should dismantle structures and systems at all levels designed and shaped by those legacies, including colonial-era laws and practices that do not conform with international human rights law.¹⁰ States should lead that comprehensive reparatory approach, in accordance with the guidance below.

10. Regarding legacies of colonialism specifically, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence noted that the duties to provide effective remedies to victims, ensure accountability, contribute to truth and memory, facilitate unrestricted access to archives and grant reparations to victims were incumbent on the former colonizing power. He noted that the State that had gained independence must assume obligations related to rehabilitation, socioeconomic reintegration and guaranteed access to justice, education, health and essential services for the victims; and the quest for truth and memorialization.¹¹

A. Reparatory justice should respond to the demands of affected communities

11. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to reparatory justice; initiatives and processes should be grounded in the history and local context, and evolving demands of communities.

⁷ See A/HRC/57/68. See also <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/racism/wgeapd/session35/wgepad-35th-session-preliminary-report.pdf>.

⁸ A/74/321, para. 61.

⁹ Conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent.

¹⁰ Ibid. and A/HRC/54/4.

¹¹ A/76/180, para. 20.

Consultations have shown that demands – and their addressees – vary: for example, between North America, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, where descendants of enslaved Africans reside; certain States in Africa, where calls focus on colonial legacies; and other contexts receiving less attention, such as the trade in enslaved Africans across the Indian Ocean.¹² Continuous consultations and context-specific measures¹³ are therefore key to meeting demands.

12. Consultations organized by OHCHR in the Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East and North Africa regions urged acknowledgement and recognition of people of African descent – a call also made in Latin America, together with the inclusion of their history and culture in formal education. According to the submissions received, Colombia and Mexico have taken steps to formally recognize people of African descent.¹⁴ Some States have conceived possible forms of reparations by addressing the issue of land redistribution, preservation of territories and regularization.¹⁵ In submissions, there were calls for the titling of territories in Brazil and Colombia.¹⁶ Consultations highlighted additional demands in some African countries, such as recognition and acknowledgement of crimes, compensation, debt cancellation and the restitution of cultural belongings and human remains.

13. In its 10-point plan for reparatory justice, adopted in 2014, the Caribbean Community calls for a full formal apology; funding for repatriation to Africa; Indigenous Peoples' development programmes; establishment of cultural institutions and return of cultural heritage; assistance in remedying the public health crisis; education programmes; enhancement of historical and cultural knowledge exchanges; psychological rehabilitation; the right to development through the transfer of technology; and debt cancellation and monetary compensation.¹⁷ In Europe and North America, demands place an emphasis on apologies, compensation, closing the racial wealth gap and equal access to housing, education, healthcare, employment, political participation and representation.

B. Reparatory justice requires a fully participatory process

14. Africans and people of African descent – notably women – should guide the design and implementation of reparatory justice processes through meaningful and inclusive consultations.¹⁸ They are essential for truth-seeking and establishing shared narratives to memorialize the suffering, resilience, resistance and dignity of victims. Capacity-building, especially regarding what constitutes reparatory justice, should precede consultations.¹⁹

15. In consultations convened by OHCHR, imposed narratives, tokenistic processes and outcomes that evoked colonial and “white saviour” approaches were rejected. To remedy a violent past in a truly restorative manner, affected communities must be able to meaningfully and safely participate in negotiations and other decision-making processes, and feel included. Rendering them invisible can result in renewed victimization, while the risk of retraumatization should be mitigated as far as possible.

16. In 2023, Ovaherero and Nama representatives filed a lawsuit before the High Court of Namibia to set aside the 2021 joint declaration between Germany and Namibia, “United in remembrance of our colonial past, united in our will to reconcile, united in our vision of the future”. Special procedure mandate holders raised concerns about the alleged lack of meaningful participation of the Ovaherero and Nama peoples in negotiations that had resulted

¹² Submission by Kartyé lib Memory and Heritage Indian Ocean.

¹³ Submission by William Darity.

¹⁴ Submissions by Mexico and Ilex Acción Jurídica.

¹⁵ Conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent; and submission by Brazil.

¹⁶ Submissions by Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas and Ilex Acción Jurídica.

¹⁷ See <https://caricom.org/caricom-ten-point-plan-for-reparatory-justice>.

¹⁸ See A/HRC/47/53 and A/HRC/54/66. See also https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/racism/EN-2023_08-Guidance_Note_Public_Participation.pdf.

¹⁹ See A/71/567.

in the declaration.²⁰ Moreover, special procedure mandate holders expressed concern at the lack of effective participation of the Chagossian people in negotiations between Mauritius and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland regarding the return of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago and that the final agreement did not provide for their right to return to Diego Garcia or guarantee their right to adequate and effective reparations.²¹

C. Reparatory justice should apply an intersectionality framework

17. A holistic application of the intersectionality framework can foster a multidimensional analysis of the interconnected nature of the root causes of human rights concerns faced by Africans and people of African descent in all their diversity, including institutional, structural and historical factors.²² Such an analysis can drive how States respond to systemic racism and related power structures and systems of oppression, including through reparatory justice.

18. A gender perspective is critical in understanding the unique sexualized and gendered forms of violence integral to the enslavement of Africans. Special procedure mandate holders have emphasized that women and girls of African descent are among those subjected to a persistent state of crisis, their lives having been shaped by histories of oppression, enslavement, exclusion, racial discrimination, forced assimilation and apartheid, linked to conquest and colonization, as well as systematic violence and disregard for their culture, spirituality and traditions.²³

19. Moreover, the specific experiences of women of African descent must be central as reparatory justice processes are developed. Truth-seeking initiatives should explicitly address the causes and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence, and consider sexual orientation and gender identity. A gender perspective should be incorporated into reparations programmes and memorialization processes.²⁴

D. Key components of reparatory justice

20. As noted above, the High Commissioner has called for wide-ranging and meaningful initiatives, including through formal apologies, truth-telling processes and reparations in various forms. A comprehensive approach with a plurality of measures should consider links between the past and the present at the individual and societal levels, in all areas of life by dismantling structures and systems designed and shaped by legacies of the past. Reparations encompass restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.²⁵

1. Reparatory justice as key to dismantling systemic racism

21. In reports and consultations, it is consistently indicated that systemic racism affects Africans and people of African descent across regions and is often rooted in histories and legacies of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism.²⁶ In their submissions, States highlighted legislative and other measures to confront racism and racial discrimination, including in Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Morocco.

²⁰ See communication DEU 1/2023, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=27875>; and communication NAM 1/2023, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=27878>.

²¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/agreement-between-mauritius-and-uk-fails-guarantee-rights-chagossians-say-un>.

²² See A/HRC/57/67. See also A/HRC/59/62.

²³ A/HRC/56/51, para. 41. See also Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, general recommendation No. 25 (1990).

²⁴ See A/75/174.

²⁵ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-and-guidelines-right-remedy-and-reparation>.

²⁶ See A/HRC/47/53 and A/HRC/57/46/Add.1.

22. It was noted in submissions that reportedly there was a lack of effective implementation of comprehensive anti-racism policies, laws and frameworks in Brazil and Colombia,²⁷ while gender-based violence faced by women,²⁸ including lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women,²⁹ of African descent and the harassment, intimidation, threats, violence and/or criminalization faced by human rights defenders of African descent have also been reported.³⁰ It was also noted in submissions that there was reportedly discrimination related to land rights and environmental racism in Latin America, including the impact of extractive processes and the disposal of toxic waste, which compromised food security.³¹ Concerns have been highlighted in reports regarding access to education, employment, adequate housing, health and clean water; the right to participate in political and public affairs;³² and discrimination against children of African descent, notably regarding access to basic services and the disproportionate impact of poverty.³³

23. Racial disparities in the criminal justice system, rooted in the legacies of enslavement and colonialism, were also reported.³⁴ The disproportionate impact on Africans and people of African descent of use-of-force violations by law enforcement officials³⁵ and of racial profiling have continued to be highlighted in reports.³⁶ The High Commissioner has repeatedly highlighted police-related fatalities of people of African descent globally.³⁷ The cases of Luana Barbosa dos Reis Santos and João Pedro Mattos Pinto (Brazil), Janner (Hanner) García Palomino (Colombia), Adama Traoré (France), Kevin Clarke (United Kingdom) and George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (United States of America) have been specifically referred to in reports to the Human Rights Council. While some individual and broader accountability measures have been taken in some cases, a lack of accountability

²⁷ Submissions by Fundação João Goulart and Ilex Acción Jurídica.

²⁸ See CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/10; and the submission by the National Human Rights Institution and Office of the Ombudsman (Uruguay).

²⁹ CEDAW/C/BRA/CO/8-9 and CEDAW/C/CUB/CO/9; and submission by Grupo de Investigaciones sobre Migraciones Africanas y Afrodescendencias.

³⁰ See CAT/C/ECU/CO/8, CERD/C/VEN/CO/22-24 and CAT/C/HND/CO/3; and communication BRA 4/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29277>.

³¹ Submissions by Acción Ecológica and Saramanta, Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas and Ilex Acción Jurídica.

³² See A/HRC/57/46/Add.1, A/HRC/59/41/Add.1, E/C.12/PRT/CO/5 and CERD/C/ECU/CO/25. See also <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/racism/wgeapd/statements/eom-statement-WGEPAD-Suriname-2025.pdf>; and submission by Elizka Relief Foundation.

³³ See CRC/C/ECU/CO/7 and CRC/C/HND/CO/6-7; and submission by the National Human Rights Institution and Office of the Ombudsman (Uruguay).

³⁴ See A/HRC/57/71 and A/HRC/57/71/Add.1; the conference room paper of the International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement on its visit to the United States, available on the OHCHR website, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc54crp7-international-independent-expert-mechanism-advance-racial>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/belgium-independent-un-body-finds-systemic-racism-against-africans-and>; and submissions by INREDH, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the National Prison Pastoral, the Institute for Land, Work and Citizenship and the Amparar Association.

³⁵ See A/HRC/59/62/Add.1, CCPR/C/HND/CO/3, CEDAW/C/CUB/CO/9 and CAT/C/FRA/CO/8; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/united-states-un-experts-urge-action-address-lives-stolen-systemic-racist>; and https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2024/203.asp&utm_content=country-usa&utm_term=class-mon.

³⁶ See CERD/C/MUS/CO/24-25; https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/em-racialjustice/Lettre-Suisse-EMLER-CHE-1-2024_24-12-2024_without%20signatures.pdf (in French); https://www.policingauthority.ie/assets/uploads/documents/Policing_of_Africans_and_Brazilians_in_Ireland_Mar25.pdf; <https://rm.coe.int/sixth-ecri-report-on-italy/1680b205f5>; <https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-on-ecri-s-activities-covering-the-period-from-1-january-1680b5bcd9>; and submission by INREDH.

³⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/06/hc-turk-updates-human-rights-council-we-need-strongest-possible>; and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/03/turbulence-and-unpredictability-amid-growing-conflict-and-divided>.

persists in most instances and families face immense challenges when pursuing justice in prolonged processes.³⁸ The International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice in Law Enforcement plays a key role in examining specific incidents, calling for an end to impunity and recommending systemic change.³⁹

24. Those examples illustrate the urgent need for reparatory justice to contribute to dismantling systemic racism against Africans and people of African descent.

2. Formal apologies

25. Public apologies are an essential element of reparation. They should be victim-centred, integrate a gender perspective, name and acknowledge past harm, admit responsibility and be accompanied by specific measures.⁴⁰ It was noted in consultations that meaningful and inclusive consultations on the wording, timing and place of apologies, who delivered them and to whom would determine whether apologies were deemed authentic.⁴¹

26. In recent years, apologies and acknowledgement of past violations were issued at national and local levels, and to different stakeholders – some to a specific group, others to a State.⁴² For example, in 2019, Belgium apologized to *métis* (mixed-race) children born during colonization to a Belgian father and an African mother for the injustices and suffering they had endured.⁴³ It was noted in submissions that no official excuses had been presented by Belgium to former colonies, and that the experiences of those mothers had reportedly not been taken into account.⁴⁴ In 2024, Brazil apologized for the enslavement of Black people.⁴⁵ In 2024, Germany tendered an “apology for the suffering that the colonists brought upon” the United Republic of Tanzania,⁴⁶ while the 2021 joint declaration between Germany and Namibia, “United in remembrance of our colonial past, united in our will to reconcile, united in our vision of the future”, foresees an apology.⁴⁷ In 2022, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands acknowledged and apologized regarding the country’s past links to enslavement. The apology’s timing and reportedly insufficient consultation with formerly enslaved communities drew criticism.⁴⁸ The United States Senate apologized to victims of lynching and the descendants of those victims for its failure to enact anti-lynching legislation; and the House of Representatives and the Senate acknowledged enslavement and segregation and apologized to people of African descent for the wrongs committed under slavery and the Jim Crow laws.⁴⁹

³⁸ See A/HRC/47/53, A/HRC/51/53, A/HRC/54/66 and A/HRC/57/67. See also the conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent; and submissions by the University of Minnesota, and the International Service for Human Rights and La Vérité pour Adama.

³⁹ See A/HRC/57/71.

⁴⁰ See A/74/147.

⁴¹ See A/76/180.

⁴² See <https://www.boston.gov/news/city-council-passes-resolution-apologizes-bostons-role-slavery>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/mar/21/comment.society>; and <https://www.utrecht.nl/zorg-en-onderwijs/iedereen-kan-meedoen-inclusie-in-de-stad/slavernijverleden> (in Dutch).

⁴³ See <https://www.lachambre.be/doc/PCRI/html/54/ip280x.html> (in Dutch and French).

⁴⁴ Submissions by the Belgian Federal Institute for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and African Futures Lab.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2024/novembro/brasil-pede-publicamente-desculpas-pela-escravizacao-das-pessoas-negras> (in Portuguese).

⁴⁶ See <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/mangi-meli/2647600>.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/2463598-2463598>; <https://www.parliament.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Joint-Declaration-Dokument-Genocide-rt.pdf>; and <https://www.nbcnews.com/node/108793>.

⁴⁸ See <https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2022/12/19/speech-by-prime-minister-mark-rutte-about-the-role-of-the-netherlands-in-the-history-of-slavery>; and <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/15/dutch-apology-slavery-only-first-step>.

⁴⁹ See <https://www.congress.gov/bills/109th-congress/senate-resolution/39>; and <https://www.congress.gov/bills/111th-congress/senate-concurrent-resolution/26>.

3. Truth-seeking and archives

27. Establishing the causes and impact of systemic racism and historical legacies is crucial to promote reparatory justice among policymakers and societies and transform the discourse. Verification of facts and full public disclosure of the truth are forms of satisfaction that can repair a measure of harm. In practice, such processes have at times led to acknowledgement and apologies and other forms of reparations.

28. Building on existing initiatives, States should initiate comprehensive processes designed to seek truth and define the harm suffered, issue recommendations and ensure their implementation. To facilitate access to knowledge and truth-seeking, States have a duty to preserve and facilitate access to evidence, including archives, concerning past violations.⁵⁰ The difficulties faced by academics in accessing archives located in former colonial countries was highlighted during consultations; there were calls for academic and religious institutions and individual families to make their records available.

29. In its submission, Brazil mentioned the Truth Commissions on Black Slavery of the Brazilian Bar Association and the Nosso Sagrado Project, which promotes documentary research and symbolic reparation actions regarding human rights violations by State security forces that affected African religious communities in Rio de Janeiro from 1888 until the mid-twentieth century. Submissions referred to truth-telling initiatives in Belgium, notably regarding *métis* children, and a parliamentary commission on the country's colonial past, which had produced research but had not adopted recommendations.⁵¹ In the United States, state and local initiatives resulted notably in apologies in California, while federal bill H.R.40 – seeking to establish a commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans – did not advance.⁵²

4. Memorialization and educational measures

30. Memorialization and educational measures are vital reparatory tools. Commemorations and tributes are deemed measures of satisfaction and States have a duty to preserve memory.⁵³ It was emphasized in the Durban Declaration that remembering the crimes or wrongs of the past was essential for reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity.

31. Examples of memorialization include walking tours in former colonial cities in Belgium and France, museums in Guadeloupe, Mauritius, Qatar, Senegal and South Africa,⁵⁴ and initiatives linked to the Network of Places of History and Memory linked to Enslavement and the Slave Trade, established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In many countries, commemorative days or months are marked, as highlighted in the submissions by Colombia and Mexico.⁵⁵

32. It was noted during consultations that Africans and people of African descent should be at the centre of memorialization and education measures. Special procedure mandate holders have expressed concerns about the planned expansion of a seaport in Namibia by business enterprises domiciled in Germany and the United Kingdom that “would endanger an important heritage site memorializing the 1904–1908 genocide, without the free, prior and

⁵⁰ See A/HRC/54/24 and E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1.

⁵¹ Submissions by the Belgian Federal Institute for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and African Futures Lab.

⁵² See <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/9.26.24-California-Apology.pdf>; https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2025/april/Mayor-Johnson-Reparations-Task-Force-Applications.html; <https://www.ny.gov/programs/new-york-state-community-commission-reparations-remedies>; <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2024/09/12/2692>; <https://adrc.illinois.gov>; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/40>; and <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/40>.

⁵³ See A/HRC/45/45, A/HRC/54/24 and E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1.

⁵⁴ See <https://memorial-acte.fr> (in French); <https://ismmauritiusltd.govmu.org/ism>; <https://msheirebmuseums.com/en/about/bin-jelmood-house>; <https://www.sitesofconscience.org/membership/maison-des-esclaves>; and <https://www.apartheidmuseum.org>.

⁵⁵ See also the submission by the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City.

informed consent” of concerned communities.⁵⁶ In Uruguay, while archaeological initiatives sought to identify and reconstruct historical sites where enslaved Africans were present,⁵⁷ a lack of participation therein by affected communities was noted during consultations. There were calls in one submission for the voices of victims of law enforcement violence and their families to be central to memorialization efforts in the United States.⁵⁸

33. The role of education in reforming historical narratives that frequently exclude contributions by Africans and people of African descent and in addressing the lack of knowledge about enslavement, colonialism and their legacies was highlighted during consultations. States should decolonize and revise school and university curricula, particularly in relation to the teaching of history, as a priority. During consultations, stakeholders called for the development of education on reparatory justice itself. A Master’s programme on reparatory justice has been established by the University of Glasgow and the University of the West Indies as part of the former’s “journey of reparative justice”.⁵⁹

34. Some public spaces have been reviewed to identify, remove or contextualize statues, place names and markers linked to individuals involved in enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans or colonialism, while in some instances a rollback has been noted.⁶⁰ Consultations and submissions highlighted initiatives in Belgium, Ghana, Mexico, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Caribbean.⁶¹ In Portugal, while the construction of a memorial to victims of slavery has been delayed, plaques highlighting Lisbon’s role in slavery have been installed.⁶²

5. Restitution

35. The restitution of human remains and cultural heritage is another important element of reparations. While initiatives continue, including the return of a natural history specimen from the University of Glasgow to Jamaica and of “Benin bronzes” from several States to Nigeria,⁶³ the lack of State support and of funding, in some instances, as well as some museums’ reluctance to return items, were highlighted during consultations.

6. Compensation

36. Claims for compensation have been lodged before courts and even in instances in which claims are ultimately determined outside of court, legal arguments have bolstered movements and created political pressure. In 2024, the Brussels Court of Appeal found the State civilly liable for crimes against humanity due to its colonial policy of segregating and forcibly displacing *métis* children and ordered compensation of 50,000 euros for each victim.⁶⁴ In 2013, following legal claims by Mau Mau victims from Kenya lodged before courts in the United Kingdom, the Government agreed notably to pay 19.9 million pounds in

⁵⁶ See communication OTH 120/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29287>; and communication GBR 10/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29290>.

⁵⁷ Submission by the National Human Rights Institution and Office of the Ombudsman (Uruguay).

⁵⁸ Submission by the University of Minnesota.

⁵⁹ See <https://global.uwi.edu/media/news/first-uwi-glasgow-reparatory-justice-masters-students-graduate>.

⁶⁰ See <https://www.splcenter.org/presscenter/splc-condemns-rename-military-bases-confederate-leaders-names>.

⁶¹ Submissions by the European Observatory on Memories and the Belgian Federal Institute for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

⁶² See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/12/slavery-street-project-portugal-lisbon-african-community>.

⁶³ See <http://196.2.1.120/fst/news/uwi-and-university-glasgow-partner-repatriate-170-year-old-jamaican-giant-galliwasp-specimen>; <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/baerbock-return-of-benin-bronzes-to-nigeria/2570334>; <https://www.homiman.ac.uk/story/six-objects-to-return-to-nigeria-as-homiman-formally-transfers-ownership-of-benin-bronzes>; and <https://rietberg.ch/en/research/the-swiss-benin-initiative>.

⁶⁴ See https://www.unia.be/files/2024_12_02-Cour-Bruxelles_2025-01-16-132310_onqv.pdf (in French).

“full and final settlement”.⁶⁵ In 2024, the Supreme Court of Oklahoma (United States) dismissed a lawsuit brought by survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and, in 2025, a federal investigation concluded that: “While legal and practical limitations prevent the perpetrators of the crimes committed in 1921 from being held criminally accountable in a court of law, the historical reckoning continues.”⁶⁶

37. Efforts have been made to quantify elements of reparations for transatlantic chattel slavery and continuing harm post-enslavement in the Americas and the Caribbean.⁶⁷ In the United States, in 2024, Baltimore City Council swore in a commission to oversee how tax revenue from the legalisation of marijuana could be reinvested into communities, notably Black residents, that had been affected by prohibition.⁶⁸ That initiative aligns with the reparations programme of Evanston City Council, which funds housing and economic development programmes for Black residents through a municipal tax based on gross sales of cannabis.⁶⁹

7. Medical and psychosocial support

38. In a 2021 study, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization noted how women experience the traumas of the legacies of slavery and that understanding those challenges was important in exploring their experiences in trans-generational traumas.⁷⁰ Consideration should be given to the intergenerational trauma and harm suffered by those who have to apply to obtain forms of reparations and to the risk of retraumatization when efforts to claim justice fail. The immense emotional and mental trauma and exhaustion faced by activists seeking reparatory justice for legacies of the past, with little support, financial or otherwise, were highlighted during consultations. During consultations, stakeholders questioned why the onus should be placed on victims and people of African descent to take on such work.

39. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence highlighted that, in many post-colonial contexts, victims of gross human rights violations had received no medical or psychosocial rehabilitation regarding the trauma that they had experienced, suffering from the continued physical injuries and physical and mental health problems associated with that trauma. He stated that, in such contexts, the colonizing power or the Government of the settler States must provide reparation in the form of rehabilitation to the victims.⁷¹ In its submission, Colombia highlighted a psychosocial programme for victims that considered historical dynamics of power and racial discrimination reflected in the armed conflict's disproportionate impact on ethnic peoples and communities.

E. Supporting an international movement

40. Increasingly, intra-State initiatives contribute to an international movement for reparatory justice. In its submission, Brazil referred to the Amefrican Paths: South-South Exchange Programme, which aims notably to reinforce the importance of strengthening cooperation ties between nations with histories interconnected by colonialism and slavery and create a network of mutual support that strengthens reparation. The Caribbean

⁶⁵ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-to-parliament-on-settlement-of-mau-mau-claims>; and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34231890>.

⁶⁶ See <https://www.reuters.com/legal/oklahoma-top-court-rejects-case-by-black-wall-street-race-massacre-survivors-2024-06-12/>; <https://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/legaldocs/jnpwawrbwpw/06122024tulsa.pdf>; and <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-results-review-and-evaluation-tulsa-race-massacre>.

⁶⁷ See <https://www.brattle.com/insights-events/publications/brattle-consultants-quantify-reparations-for-transatlantic-chattel-slavery-in-pro-bono-paper>.

⁶⁸ See <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2024-11-14/realization-of-a-dream-baltimore-swears-in-historic-commission>; and <https://codes.baltimorecity.gov/us/md/cities/baltimore/code/1/59-2>.

⁶⁹ See <https://www.cityofevanston.org/government/city-council/reparations>.

⁷⁰ See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384447>.

⁷¹ See A/76/180.

Community Reparations Commission called upon “former slave-owning nations of Europe ... to engage Caribbean governments in reparatory dialogue to address the living legacies of these crimes”. The 10-point plan has led some descendants of the co-owners of plantations in Grenada to publicly apologize for their ancestors’ involvement in enslavement.⁷²

41. In a resolution adopted in 2019, the European Parliament recalled “that some Member States have taken steps toward meaningful and effective redress for past injustices and crimes against humanity” and called for the European Union institutions and other member States to follow that example.⁷³ The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted a resolution calling on States notably to “conceptualise reparations from Africa’s perspective”.⁷⁴ Commitments outlined in the 2023 Accra Proclamation on Reparations – resulting from a conference supported by the African Union – included exploring legal and judicial options for reparations.⁷⁵ In 2024, the Commonwealth Heads of Government, noting calls for discussions on reparatory justice, with regard to the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and chattel enslavement, agreed “that the time has come for a meaningful, truthful and respectful conversation towards forging a common future based on equity”.⁷⁶ In 2025, the African Union adopted a decision in which it emphasized the gravity of the historical injustices perpetrated against Africans and people of African descent through slavery, deportation, apartheid and colonization,⁷⁷ and its theme of the year was “Justice for Africans and people of African descent through reparations”, notably aiming to develop a common African position.⁷⁸

IV. Role of other stakeholders

A. Academic institutions and museums

42. Some academic institutions have carried out or funded research into their history, apologized, advanced educational opportunities for descendant communities and created memorials.⁷⁹ In the United Kingdom, the University of Cambridge announced that it would return Benin artefacts.⁸⁰ In the United States, the reparations endowment fund of the Virginia Theological Seminary provides cash payments to descendants of enslaved people who worked on campus.⁸¹

43. Critical memorial spaces, such as museums, should acknowledge and address their collections’ links with the past. For example, in Belgium, the AfricaMuseum took steps regarding its collection following recommendations made by the Working Group of Experts

⁷² See <https://caricom.org/caricom-strengthens-commitment-to-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-caribbean>; and <https://caricomreparations.org/grenada-reparations-forum>.

⁷³ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0239_EN.html.

⁷⁴ See <https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/543-resolution-africas-reparations-agenda-and-human-rights-africans>.

⁷⁵ See https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/43383-Declaration_-_CIDO_.pdf.

⁷⁶ See <https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-10/leaders-statement-commonwealth-heads-of-government-meeting-2024.pdf?VersionId=k0i2QcE0WmUkimu7r.6G30eXK5sp215o>.

⁷⁷ See https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/45112-Assembly_AU_Dec_903_-_941_XXXVIII_E.pdf; and submission by the National Human Rights Commission (Togo).

⁷⁸ See <https://au.int/en/theme/2025>.

⁷⁹ See <https://www.trinshall.cam.ac.uk/about/history/legacies-of-enslavement-project>; <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/anti-racism-at-bristol/reparative-futures-programme>; <https://www.georgetown.edu/news/georgetown-apologizes-for-1838-sale-of-272-slaves-dedicates-buildings>; https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2025/01/CommunityUpdate.jbv1_6_spreads_FINAL-ua.pdf; <https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/progress>; <https://slavery.princeton.edu>; and <https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/codrington-legacy>.

⁸⁰ See <https://www.cam.ac.uk/stories/beninreturn>.

⁸¹ See <https://vts.edu/mission/multicultural-ministries/reparations>.

on People of African Descent in 2019.⁸² In Spain, the Government established a working group for the decolonization of museums in 2023.⁸³ In the United Kingdom, the Parliamentary Art Collection is being reviewed to show links to “the trading and the use of forced labour” of enslaved people.⁸⁴

B. Religious groups

44. Religious groups have begun to acknowledge their links with slavery, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism, including through research, truth-telling initiatives and commitments to grants.⁸⁵

45. In Barbados, in 2024, the Codrington Trust and United Society Partners in the Gospel established a steering committee to govern a project “in response to [the latter’s] shameful links to slavery through its ownership of the Codrington Estates”.⁸⁶ In 2017, the Catholic Church of Belgium apologized for its role regarding *métis* children.⁸⁷ In 2024, the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom apologized to Jamaica for its role in transatlantic slavery, pledging to give land parcels that it had received from those who had profited from slavery to the most vulnerable.⁸⁸

C. Business enterprises

46. The High Commissioner has called for business enterprises to assess their ongoing and past links to, and how they benefited from, enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism. Where links to their operations, products or services are established, they should acknowledge and apologize for their involvement in, or profiting from, those practices; and where relevant, they should provide for or cooperate in their remediation through legitimate processes.⁸⁹ Those recommendations are grounded in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which state that a business has a responsibility to secure remedies for victims for harm that it has caused or contributed to.⁹⁰

47. Measures taken by business enterprises often begin with independent research into links with the past. For example, the Bank of Brazil formally apologized for and committed to confront its historical ties to enslavement; a lack of implementation of reparative measures was indicated in one submission.⁹¹ *The Guardian* apologized to Jamaica alongside families whose ancestors had profited from slavery “to atone for ... connections to transatlantic

⁸² See https://www.africamuseum.be/en/about_us/history_renovation; https://www.africamuseum.be/sites/default/files/media/press/doc/DEF_Persdossier%20FR%20grande%20rotonde%20%2027.02.2020.pdf (in French); and A/HRC/42/59/Add.1.

⁸³ See <https://icom.museum/en/committee/working-group-on-decolonisation>.

⁸⁴ See <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/works-of-art/reviewing-and-updating-the-parliamentary-art-collection/parliamentary-art-collection-and-links-to-the-transatlantic-slave-trade-27.03.2024-v8.pdf>.

⁸⁵ See https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/365504/Racial_Justice_Advocacy.aspx?redirected=1; and <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-reference-group-meets-in-ghana-to-discuss-realities-of-racism-xenophobia-and-casteism-around-the-world>.

⁸⁶ See <https://uspg.org.uk/codrington-project> and <https://www.codringtonproject.org/about>.

⁸⁷ See https://www.senate.be/web/api/lotus/v1/web/media/c34bda67-7332-4e5d-ab12-f355e45bc161.pdf/inline/Compte_rendu-Verslag.pdf (in Dutch and French).

⁸⁸ See <https://urc.org.uk/jamaican-government-minister-accepts-urcs-apology-for-its-role-in-transatlantic-slavery>.

⁸⁹ See the conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent.

⁹⁰ See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf.

⁹¹ See <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-12-23/bank-of-brazil-apologizes-for-its-complicity-in-the-slave-trade.html>; and submission by the Office of the Regional Prosecutor of Rio de Janeiro for Citizens’ Rights.

enslavement”.⁹² In 2025, Lloyd’s Register acknowledged its role in “transatlantic trafficking of enslaved African people” and announced measures related to archives and partnership with the International Slavery Museum (Liverpool).⁹³ The key role some banks seek to play in raising awareness and engaging society in efforts to confront the past and tackle racism today, through diversity, equity and inclusion policies, reviewing lending and business practices, and supporting cultural and educational initiatives was underscored during consultations.

48. Some State-led initiatives have considered the role of business enterprises. Notably, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa established the involvement of certain businesses in designing and implementing apartheid policies; however, the multinational corporations did not respond to its invitation to participate in its work.⁹⁴ In 2002, victims of apartheid filed a claim against corporations in the United States under the Alien Tort Statute for their operations in South Africa during apartheid. While one company settled out of court, the claim ultimately ended in 2016 with a finding that the plaintiffs had not plausibly alleged relevant conduct committed within the United States that was sufficient to rebut the Statute’s presumption against extraterritoriality.⁹⁵

D. Civil society and solidarity among movements

49. Civil society, notably organizations led by people of African descent, have been instrumental in spurring States, the United Nations and others to take bolder steps towards reparatory justice. Civil society-led processes have often filled the gap where Governments have failed to act, and they should be fully supported. They are central to grounding action in a local context, building the agency of people of African descent and ensuring implementation and monitoring. Such processes can also create a narrative and space where there is no political will or where hostility exists. For example, after initially not acting upon the 2006 report of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission – a privately funded, community-led body in the United States investigating killings of activists during anti-Ku Klux Klan protests in 1979 – the Greensboro City Council, in October 2020, adopted a resolution citing the Commission’s report, apologized and established a scholarship fund in memory of the victims.⁹⁶ Notwithstanding its critical role, the onus should not fall on civil society; States should initiate comprehensive processes combining a plurality of measures.

50. The High Commissioner has called for solidarity across equality and human rights movements, States and regions, to amplify voices and forge activism. All stakeholders, and especially States as duty bearers, should create and prioritize spaces for them to operate freely and safely. Lessons can be learned and partnerships created with gender equality, climate and other justice movements, and with other racial or ethnic groups calling for reparations for legacies from the past. That includes Indigenous Peoples who view recognition, reparation and reconciliation as a means of addressing colonization and its long-term effects and of overcoming challenges with deep historical roots, such as repatriation of cultural belongings and land dispossession.⁹⁷

⁹² See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/20/guardian-apology-to-the-jamaican-government-at-emancipation-jubilee-event>.

⁹³ See <https://www.lr.org/en/about-us/who-we-are/our-history/lloyds-register-and-the-transatlantic-trafficking-of-enslaved-african-people>.

⁹⁴ See <https://www.justice.gov.za/TRC/report/finalreport/Volume%204.pdf>.

⁹⁵ See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-apartheid-idUSKCN0Z61KA>; <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/us-supreme-court-rejects-appeal-by-so-africans-against-ibm-ford-for-alleged-support-of-apartheid>; and <https://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/150727-Apartheid-Decision-2d-Circuit.pdf>.

⁹⁶ See <https://greensboro.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4655516&GUID=9DD3B284-7B46-44AF-A538-BB285FC581D0>; <https://greensborotrc.org>; and https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/ICTJ_Report_Civi-Society-Truth_2.pdf.

⁹⁷ See A/76/180, A/HRC/45/38 and A/HRC/EMRIP/2019/3/Rev.1; and <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Session12/MaasoKova.pdf>.

V. Broader structural and systemic issues requiring further reflection

A. Reparatory justice and transitional justice

51. Transitional justice covers the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt – generally post-conflict or post-authoritarian regimes – to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.⁹⁸ Transitional justice norms and measures can inform efforts to confront legacies of the past.⁹⁹ The Secretary-General has also opined that applying a transitional justice lens regarding the climate crisis could complement other equity-based approaches, capturing dimensions of historical, colonial and systemic injustices relating to the root causes of climate change.¹⁰⁰

52. Moreover, reparatory justice approaches can complement transitional justice processes by considering legacies of the past. It was highlighted in consultations that most transitional justice processes in Africa did not acknowledge the role of colonialism as a root cause of conflict, overlooking its relevance to those processes. Although power structures were reformed at independence, the importance of analysing any continued application of policies of discrimination, oppression, dispossession and marginalization and how they influenced the emergence of conflicts and human rights violations, as well as the continued marginalization of victimized communities in some instances after independence, has been noted.¹⁰¹

B. Reparatory justice and international law obligations

53. States have presented differing views on whether there is an obligation to provide reparations for slavery and/or colonialism.¹⁰² Whether such an obligation exists in international law or is in the making remains under discussion, including by United Nations human rights mechanisms and others.¹⁰³

54. The High Commissioner has acknowledged those debates, notably that some argue against accountability and redress for historical legacies, citing the complexity of considering centuries-old serious human rights violations and abuses with now-deceased perpetrators and victims, and the presumption that harms of systemic racism ended with the abolition of chattel slavery.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, some have invoked the intertemporal principle, according to which only the rules of criminal law that were valid at the time of the alleged conduct may be applied, to exclude the possibility of prosecutions for offences committed prior to the following events. Moreover, some have noted that delineations of State responsibility and the design and financing of effective reparations programmes that address the temporal and material scope and possible beneficiaries are challenging to define and negotiate, raising complex issues notably regarding financial compensation claims.¹⁰⁵

55. However, in some contexts, victims and perpetrators may still be alive, with a corresponding duty on the State to ensure accountability.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, calls for justice do not stop when direct victims die and, if left unaddressed, they risk deepening systemic

⁹⁸ See S/2004/616.

⁹⁹ See A/HRC/58/36; and <https://www.ictj.org/resource-library/truth-reconciliation-and-redress-racial-injustice-united-states-insights>.

¹⁰⁰ See A/HRC/57/30.

¹⁰¹ See A/76/180.

¹⁰² See A/79/304.

¹⁰³ See A/74/321; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-cerd-general-recommendation-regarding-reparations-historical>; and <https://www.asil.org/sites/default/files/reparations/2021%20Reparations%20Proceedings.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ See the conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. and A/74/321.

¹⁰⁶ See A/76/180.

discrimination. The continuous nature of some acts and crimes, as well as the exceptions of statute of limitations for serious human rights violations that constitute international crimes, may provide possible avenues to achieve justice and surmount challenges.¹⁰⁷

56. Some have questioned, including during consultations, how laws designed for and by colonial powers could be deemed legitimate to repair the structures and systems that they had upheld. They called for a decolonization of international law and doctrines to achieve basic principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity through reparatory justice.¹⁰⁸ While additional discussions among key actors may be needed – for example, regarding the intertemporal principle – for some, the very relevance of international law to address key issues facing humankind and the international community is at stake. Others opine that legal formalism obscures the full potential of international law to support reparations for colonialism and slavery,¹⁰⁹ for example by considering systemic racism as a continuing violation of international law.

57. It has been noted that, where there is political will to mobilize the law to address the trans-generational consequences of enslavement in the form of contemporary systemic racism, there is also a way to do so. To the extent that legal barriers exist, they should not be treated as insurmountable.¹¹⁰

C. Reparatory justice, climate and environmental justice

58. Special procedure mandate holders have detailed how environmental racism, the climate crisis and the ocean's degradation disproportionately affect people of African descent, owing in part to colonialism, the trade in enslaved Africans and unjust economic and trade policies,¹¹¹ and that the regions most affected are so in significant part owing to the colonial processes that caused historical emissions in the first place.¹¹² In South Africa, the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes noted that environmental racism, rooted in colonialism and apartheid, continued to prevail, denoting discrimination and disproportionately adverse impacts from pervasive air, water and chemical pollution faced by Black communities and other marginalized groups.¹¹³

59. Calls have been made for reparations to address historic climate injustice and its contemporary manifestations through global, national and local collaboration and partnerships with marginalized groups, ensuring that those suffering the brunt of climate-related harms have sufficient means to hold States and other duty bearers accountable. Proposed measures include fundamental reorientation of political institutions, economic systems and legal principles to include racial justice and equality priorities; adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage frameworks that uproot the systemic racism built into the global economy, political hierarchies and legal frameworks; holding transnational corporations accountable for environmental racism and climate injustice; and calls for former colonial States to provide climate funding and debt cancellation.¹¹⁴

D. Reparatory justice, the right to development and development aid

60. The Secretary-General has stated that the right to development is an important framework for seeking redress for historic and contemporary injustices. The Expert

¹⁰⁷ See the conference room paper of the High Commissioner on promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent; and [A/76/180](#) and [A/78/317](#).

¹⁰⁸ See [A/74/321](#).

¹⁰⁹ See <https://www.asil.org/sites/default/files/reparations/2021%20Reparations%20Proceedings.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ See [A/HRC/48/78](#) and [A/HRC/58/59](#).

¹¹² [A/77/549](#), para. 4.

¹¹³ [A/HRC/57/52/Add.1](#), para. 6.

¹¹⁴ See [A/77/549](#) and [A/HRC/57/30](#); and <https://promiseinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Executive-Summary-Climate-Injustice-in-Haiti-Report-ENGLISH.pdf>.

Mechanism on the Right to Development has opined that that right has emerged as a normative response to the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on human rights, aiming to address gaps in the international human rights framework.¹¹⁵ The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent has recognized the integral role of reparatory justice to the accomplishment of sustainable development, including by developing a comprehensive, coordinated agenda for global reparatory justice, global economic justice and sustainable development.¹¹⁶ The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has argued that historical injustices have undeniably contributed to underdevelopment and economic disparities; and that States, United Nations agencies and international financial institutions should consider the linkage between enslavement and colonialism that has led to underdevelopment, including reflecting it in development policies.¹¹⁷

61. According to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, development aid perpetuates and reinforces an economic and political system that is based on colonial hierarchies of submission; and development aid projects that do not acknowledge accountability and do not aim to improve the specific conditions in which victims find themselves are not adequate substitutes for reparation programmes.¹¹⁸ The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has noted that development aid could be part of a suite of reparatory measures if pursued in a manner that acknowledges the connection between contemporary structures of racial inequality and discrimination and their historical root causes.¹¹⁹

E. Reparatory justice, debt and the international financial and governance architecture

62. In 2025, the Secretary-General recalled that Africa was under colonial domination when today's multilateral system was created – and that injustice endures, requiring action to ensure fair representation at the United Nations and to reform the outdated, dysfunctional and unfair international financial architecture.¹²⁰ The High Commissioner has also called for reforms of international financial institutions and the global debt and tax architecture.¹²¹ The African Union has raised the issue of the need to reform the global financial and trade architecture and the Security Council, amid calls for lending in local currencies and debt relief. Barbados launched the Bridgetown Initiative calling for urgent action to reform the international financial architecture.¹²²

63. Debt cancellation has been identified by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence as a form of reparation for former colonies, given that slavery and colonialism engendered the former colonies' sovereign debt and that its cancellation would therefore constitute a form of collective compensation for loss of potential income.¹²³ The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has noted that international legal doctrines were central to embedding racial inequality and subordination into the colonial

¹¹⁵ A/74/308, para. 4; and A/HRC/54/4, para. 14.

¹¹⁶ A/HRC/57/68, para. 55 (b).

¹¹⁷ A/HRC/54/67, para. 118.

¹¹⁸ A/76/180, paras. 60 and 108.

¹¹⁹ A/74/321, para. 54.

¹²⁰ See <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sgsm22557.doc.htm>.

¹²¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/sixth-interessional-meeting-human-rights-and-the-2030-agenda>.

¹²² See https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/conceptnotes/44462-CN-CN_2025_Theme_of_the_Year.pdf; <https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/ffd4-documents/2025/Compromiso%20de%20Sevilla%20for%20action%2016%20June.pdf>; https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/files/documents/2024/publications/2024-nepad-report_en.pdf; https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/44015-ASSEMBLY_AU_DEC_866_-_902_XXXVII_E.pdf; and <https://www.bridgetown-initiative.org>.

¹²³ See A/76/180.

extractivism economy and urged States to decolonize international law and adopt a comprehensive approach to reparation.¹²⁴

64. Regarding Haiti, United Nations independent experts have stressed the need to address the root causes of the current human rights situation, including those “rooted in legacies of enslavement, colonialism, debt payment, military threats and interventions”.¹²⁵ Moreover, calls for reparatory justice linked to the payment made by Haiti to France as compensation for “lost property” (land and enslaved people) were highlighted during consultations. In 2025, the President of France announced the establishment of a joint Haiti-France commission to look into the past and the impact of the payment made by Haiti at independence; and a resolution was adopted in parliament for recognition, reimbursement and reparation by France of the “double debt” of Haiti.¹²⁶

VI. Work to advance racial justice and equality by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

65. OHCHR has contributed to strengthening the international movement on reparatory justice by creating spaces for active listening and dialogue with Africans and people of African descent, ensuring that its work is anchored in lived experiences and reflected their knowledge and expertise. OHCHR convened in-person consultations with civil society activists of African descent from North America and the Caribbean in December 2024, and with activists from Africa in April 2025. Nine virtual consultations were held with civil society activists, primarily of African descent, from the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Europe, and with business enterprises.

66. OHCHR built capacity, raised visibility and advocated for actions to advance racial justice and equality, including through senior fellows of African descent and the participation of directly affected individuals at the Human Rights Council.¹²⁷ OHCHR regional advisers on combating racial discrimination and the protection of minorities have built the capacity of the Regional Network for Development and Anti-Racism in the Middle East and North Africa and have continued to support activists in Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Europe Pan-African Coalition on Reparatory Justice and civil society efforts to formulate recommendations for the post-2025 European Union Anti-Racism Strategy were also supported.

67. OHCHR has provided technical assistance to increase State capacity to realize the right to access justice, including for Afro-Honduran peoples.¹²⁸ OHCHR has also

¹²⁴ See A/HRC/41/54 and A/74/321.

¹²⁵ See pfpad-position-paper-haiti-publication.pdf; and <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/racism/wgeapd/statements/20240904-WG-Statement-International-Day-for-People-African-Descent-EN.pdf>.

¹²⁶ See <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2025/04/17/declaration-du-president-de-la-republique-sur-la-relation-entre-la-france-et-haiti> (in French); and https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/textes/117t0137_texte-adopte-seance (in French).

¹²⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2025/04/domestic-workers-journey-becoming-community-leader-lebanon>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/stories/defending-ancestral-lands-garifuna-struggle-honduras>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/permanent-forum-african-descent-turk-urges-strong-action-against>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/12/second-international-decade-people-african-descent-renews-call-recognition-justice>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/11/turk-calls-proclamation-second-international-decade-people-african>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/10/high-commissioner-turk-intersectional-approach-systemic-racism>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/09/human-rights-are-our-mainstay-against-unbridled-power>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/08/high-commissioner-celebrates-profound-contribution-people-african>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/06/we-must-urgently-find-our-way-back-peace-says-high-commissioner>; and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/10/experts-intersectional-lens-key-addressing-systemic-racism>.

¹²⁸ See A/HRC/57/75.

strengthened the protection and promotion of the rights of people of African descent in Iraq and Colombia.¹²⁹

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

68. Reparatory justice for legacies of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans, colonialism and successive racially discriminatory policies and systems is yet to be delivered. While recent years have seen growing awareness, demands and momentum for reparations in various forms, limited steps have been taken amid a rollback on racial justice commitments by some States. Political leaders have a responsibility to offer creative, effective and comprehensive responses to calls for reparatory justice, tailored to the demands and specificities of each context. States and other actors should build support for reparatory justice by taking specific steps to show how it benefits all of society and is critical to dismantling systemic racism; and for transforming relationships of discrimination and inequity and for mutually committing to and investing in a stronger, more resilient future of dignity, equality and non-discrimination for all.

69. Reparatory justice requires a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach grounded in international human rights law combining a plurality of measures, including formal apologies, truth-telling processes and reparations in various forms. That requires applying an intersectional framework and intergenerational analysis of the impacts of legacies of the past across systems and structures today, including through legislative, institutional and policy reforms. At the international level, reforms should address the shortcomings of the development aid and international financial and governance architecture.

70. First and foremost, States should take those measures – with Africans and people of African descent guiding their design and implementation through meaningful, inclusive and safe participation. To foster that movement, States should provide an enabling and safe environment by reaffirming their commitment to fighting racial injustice and protecting those working on combating systemic racism and reparatory justice.

71. Religious groups, business enterprises and others should consider their links to the past and examine avenues for reparation. Stakeholders are encouraged to conduct truth-telling initiatives, reimagine public spaces and commemorations, spur public debate, create a momentum and contribute to broader societal acknowledgement and recognition. Reparatory justice should mobilize civil society, community and religious leaders, faith-based actors and business enterprises, together with politicians and public servants. Research and policy proposals should be supported notably on broader structural and systemic issues identified in the present report. In a period of political and societal divisions, building national, regional and global networks and working intersectionally across equality movements, including those working on gender equality, climate and environmental justice, is essential.

72. National processes should be complemented by initiatives involving inter-State, cross-boundary dialogue and cooperation, including with the African Union and communities in former colonies. The Second International Decade for People of African Descent and the elaboration of the United Nations declaration on the promotion and full respect of the human rights of people of African descent give impetus to States to take specific action to respond to the growing calls for reparatory justice. More broadly, States are urged to fully implement their international human rights law obligations, and recommendations by United Nations human rights mechanisms and those contained in the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality.

¹²⁹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/ohchr-reports/ohchr-report-2023.pdf>; and A/HRC/56/71.