

STATEMENT ON SUB-THEME 2: UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL JUSTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AFRICA DIALOGUE SERIES 2025

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

This year's Africa Dialogue Series, under the powerful theme, "***Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations***," is not simply a reflection on the past. As USG Cristina Duarte wisely stated, "***...today's wrongs need to be placed in direct relation to yesterday's crimes.***" Sub-theme 2 challenges us to examine the foundations of our economic, social, and cultural systems, and to ask: how do we deliver justice not as sentiment, but as structured and lasting transformation?

In his Africa Day 2025 message, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, acknowledged with clarity and courage that, "***Africa bears the scars of historic injustices. The legacies of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and systemic racism still cast long shadows, and entrenched inequalities affect Africans and people of African descent to this day.***" This powerful affirmation must guide our deliberations, not as rhetoric, but as a call to action.

Africa's economic landscape was shaped in the furnace of exploitation. Slavery and colonialism dismantled societies, severed communities, and built extractive economic systems that still endure. These injustices did not vanish with independence; they evolved, becoming embedded in global trade structures, financial hierarchies, and development models. The recent engagement between an African Head of State and the leader of a major global power has, in the view of many, peeled back the veneer of civility to expose an enduring condescension that has long been present in subliminal form, though carefully cloaked in the conventions of diplomacy. It is a vivid reminder that structural injustice is not merely a relic of the past, it continues to manifest, both subtly and overtly, in the way Africa is perceived and engaged on the global stage.

This enduring inequity is not abstract; it finds expression in the lived realities of African economies today. Zimbabwe, like many African countries, continues to export the minerals that power the global economy, yet we receive only a fragment of their real value. Our sovereign efforts to redress historical land

inequities triggered punitive sanctions, unilateral coercive measures that largely remain in place more than two decades later. This is how structural injustice persists: through modern instruments of control cloaked in legality.

Reparatory justice must begin with economic restructuring. Africa's continued reliance on raw exports, compounded by crushing debt and inflated risk premiums, perpetuates vulnerability and dependence. Zimbabwe has taken steps through policies such as the 2023 Base Minerals Export Control Order, which mandates value addition and taxes unprocessed exports. But these efforts must be matched by global reforms, reforms that democratise finance, restore agency over capital flows, and invest in infrastructure, innovation, and industrialisation.

Yet economic justice alone is insufficient. It must walk hand-in-hand with social transformation. We must institutionalise equity in access to education, healthcare, and employment, especially for women and youth. Africa's young people are not merely beneficiaries; they are architects of the continent's future. Justice demands we empower them with tools, spaces, and voice.

Cultural justice is equally vital. The legacy of colonialism robbed us not only of wealth but of identity. Restitution of looted cultural artefacts is part of the journey, but our deeper battle is for narrative sovereignty. Zimbabwe continues efforts to repatriate stolen cultural treasures, yet more crucially, we are revitalising Indigenous knowledge, languages, and oral traditions. Reclaiming these is not nostalgia, it is resistance, self-definition, and the heart of decolonisation.

This broader vision of justice must be grounded in human rights. It includes the right to development, education, decent work, and a healthy environment. These are not privileges; they are entitlements. The UN General Assembly has rightly recognised the right to a clean and sustainable environment. For Africa, disproportionately burdened by climate change despite contributing just 2–3% of global emissions, this right is existential.

Thus, climate justice is part of reparatory justice. It calls for equitable access to climate finance, technology, and capacity-building. It calls for protecting lives and creating green livelihoods, particularly for Africa's youth. It is not just about survival, it is about dignity and opportunity.

Let us be clear: reparatory justice is not a handout. It is a legal, moral, and developmental obligation. It must redress historical atrocities through

structural transformation, financial equity, cultural restoration, environmental responsibility, and institutional reform.

True liberation is not complete without intellectual and cultural emancipation. Justice must move from memory to agency, from remembrance to empowerment, from rhetorical solidarity to practical restitution.

The time for justice is not some distant tomorrow. It is now.

I thank you.