



PERMANENT MISSION OF  
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**TO INTRODUCE DRAFT RESOLUTION A/68/L.7  
“PERMANENT MEMORIAL TO AND REMEMBRANCE OF  
THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE”**

**UNDER AGENDA ITEM 120:  
FOLLOW-UP TO THE COMMEMORATION OF THE TWO-HUNDREDTH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE  
TRADE**

**68<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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*Please check against delivery*

Mr. President,

The institutionalised system of Slavery and its enabler, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, represent an appalling yet consequential period in the course of human history. It reflects a tragic age when the successful efforts to divide the human family were played out on a grand scale, which covered that vast geographic and economic triangle linking Europe, Africa and the Americas.

It was a time when our common humanity was not yet acknowledged and a man and his family, through barbaric exploitation, could claim ownership over another man, woman, or child and see to his own needs and enlargement at their expense. It was a time when nations became great and wealthy, others emerged, while some were subjugated and exploited. Some scholars posit the view that Slavery is one of the single most influential occurrences in history that has shaped every aspect of the world as we now know it.

And so it is an honour for me to introduce this draft resolution in this great Assembly, where once again the global community has the opportunity to condemn this contemptible and barbaric historical practice, but also to renew a pledge to ensure that nothing of the kind is ever again visited upon humanity. The draft resolution A/68/L.7 entitled "Permanent Memorial to and Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade" tabled before us today continues to take account of the need to ensure that present and future generations are made aware of the past and enjoined in the determination to prevent anything so dastardly from happening again.

A key activity in this quest is the erection here at the United Nations Headquarters of the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Let me take this opportunity, as Chair of the committee established to steer this project to reality, to advise of the successful completion of the international artistic competition to select a design for the memorial that was held over the past two years. At this juncture, I would like to express our gratitude to UNESCO and to the United Nations Office for Partnerships for their excellent collaboration in conducting the competition. A total of 310 entries were received from persons representing 83 nationalities. 16 contestants were short-listed and evaluated through an anonymous procedure by a panel of international judges, who each are experts in their fields and reflect a cross section of nationalities. 7 finalists were brought to New York and were interviewed and their models assessed by the panel of judges. They came to a unanimous decision on the winning design – 'Ark of Return' by Rodney Leon – which was unveiled on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 in a special ceremony here at UN HQ.

I wish to again congratulate Mr. Leon, and also extend congratulations to the other finalists, whose works we are told by the judges were all of high quality and showed a good understanding of the depth and importance of the subject matter. The Ark of Return, according to the judges, "is an entirely feasible and appropriate proposal" which has an "impressive visual impact" and invites "exploration by the viewers". We owe a debt of gratitude to this panel of distinguished judges – Dr. David Boxer (Jamaica), Ms. Nadia Bakhurji (Saudi Arabia), Ms. Dominique Fontaine (Canada,

Haiti), Prof. Michael Gomez (USA), and Dr. Ashfaq Ishaq (Pakistan, USA) - who undertook this enormous task on a completely voluntary basis and have pledged their ongoing commitment to the memorial.

Mr. President,

It would be remiss of me to not also convey deep appreciation to those Member States who have so generously contributed to the Permanent Memorial Fund. We appreciate all donations received which, in many ways, is reflective of a broader commitment to the goals of the permanent memorial project as represented not only in this draft resolution, but in those we have annually adopted under this agenda item since 2006. We also express thanks to the range of private individuals, corporations and foundations that have made contributions as well. This broadens the scope of 'ownership' of and fidelity to this noble initiative.

The ongoing work to bring this worthy project to completion would not have been possible without the vision and unstinting support of a team of pioneers who laid the firm foundation on which we now build. Here I must mention my predecessor Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, who worked tirelessly to bring the vision to a reality. Allow me also to make special mention of Mr Amir Dossal, former head of UNOP, who was a committed partner and, though officially retired from the UN, remains faithful to the initiative.

We will now embark on the final phase of the project, which is to commission the construction and erection of the Memorial on the UN podium.

Mr. President,

The aim of the resolution is not only to endorse the erection of the monument. Though that in itself is an admirable accomplishment in honour of the victims of slavery, we consider that the more important aspect in the resolution is the one that calls for broad education and outreach to disseminate information to the global public on the history and impact of slavery. The aim is to influence modern social norms in a way that rejects racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice, and promotes healing, tolerance and respect for diversity.

It is for this reason we have continued to emphasise the work of the UN, through the Department of Public Information, in maintaining a focus on this important aspect of relations in the global society. I commend the excellent work that has been done by the DPI over these years and implore all Member States to actively engage in the outreach programme envisioned in the resolution. The Secretary-General's Report A/68/291 illustrates a raft of noteworthy activities undertaken across the globe by the Organisation to achieve this mandate. We encourage further activities to this end.

Mr. President,

In commending this draft to this august body for adoption, let us be reminded that we share one humanity and that, there is no place for prejudice and discrimination.

Mr. President,

As we mark these milestones, the best way to honour the memory of those victims is to fulfil their fundamental hope for equality, dignity, humanity and justice for every human being. I am pleased, on behalf of the CARICOM group, the African group, and our co-sponsoring partners to present this draft for consideration and adoption.

Thank you.