



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF LATIN AMERICAN
AND CARIBBEAN STATES (GRULAC)**

AT

**THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF
SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
25th MARCH 2015**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States as Chair for the month of March. This statement reflects the position of our Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is an important one on the calendar of international days declared by this General Assembly. It is the pinnacle of a series of events and activities that are bringing focus and attention to the issue of Slavery. Resolution 61/19 adopted as the General Assembly commemorated the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, other things, designated the Day, and speaks to the purpose behind the commemoration. It reminds us that we not only remember the victims and honour their sacrifice, but we also need to address the legacies that remain from that dark and horrific period of human history.

We are pleased that our countries have been very active in the efforts of the international community to rectify the negative impacts that Slavery has had on society, and in the lives of our people. Latin American and Caribbean countries, as reflected by the CELAC special declaration on the initiative of erecting a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, helped spearhead the initiative to erect the Permanent Memorial and are pleased that we have been able to unveil the beautiful and impactful Ark of Return this afternoon; our countries were actively involved in the push for the proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the adoption of an ambitious yet effective Programme of Activities to give meaningful implementation to the Decade, through which the international community and its members are called to honour the memory of victims of tragedies such as the transatlantic slave trade, with a view to closing those dark chapters in history and as a means of reconciliation and healing

We have made the commitments because our countries believe firmly that the most meaningful way to honour the victims of Slavery is by dealing with the present realities faced by their descendants who populate our region bringing the diversity and strength that makes our societies strong. Our CELAC Plan of Action for Latin American and Caribbean Peoples of African Descent adopted in the III CELAC Summit held in Belen in 2015 guides our efforts to fully incorporate People of African Descent and ensure that the development goals at the national and regional levels are inclusive.

Mr. President,

This year's thematic focus for the International Day and Commemoration programme, "Women and Slavery", fittingly coincides with the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action. That overlap gives us greater opportunity to consider the unique challenges faced by Slave women and the role women played in the resistance to Slavery and its eventual collapse. Women faced exacerbated hardships for in addition to being slaves; they were also women - subjected to devaluing, sexual and physical violence, the unequal burden of raising families and caring for the children, the sick and the elderly without their male counterparts in an often purposeful exercise by the established plantocracy. It was through their resilience, sacrifice, creativity and hard work that many were able to survive, and in some cases thrive despite the circumstances.

These circumstances mirror the very issues addressed by the Beijing Conference and its outcomes. They remain relevant today, because women of African Descent continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The struggle of the Slave woman to overcome therefore continues and rests with us to complete the ultimate victory over discrimination and inequality.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the lingering effects of Slavery have had and continue to have an indelible impact on our societies. On the one hand, we have a diversity of ethnicity and culture which presents valuable human capital. On the other hand however, we have ingrained social stratification much of which bears

its origins to the colonial era where exploitation of both indigenous and imported peoples took place. Latin American and Caribbean States are determined however to achieve a society where all people are equal; where one's prospects and developmental achievements are not marked by the colour of one's skin or their ethnic background. We are striving for fully inclusive societies where all can benefit from the progress we make and at the same time contribute to that progress.

Mr. President,

The peoples of our region have suffered an incalculable wrong. In some cases, there has been the beginning of reconciliation and justice. We are mindful however that much more needs to be done to balance the scales of justice. The inequalities and repression developed out of Slavery and the Slave Trade were man made; in the same way, the undoing of those challenges need to be addressed by all of us working together to ensure that in all the dimensions of sustainable development those who were exploited and harmed are allowed their just part in global progress. We must ensure that in crafting the global development agenda, we take full account of the special needs of those who have been set back by the travesty of Slavery. Once and for all, we should begin to right the wrongs.

The Latin American and Caribbean States will continue to support and lead our collective actions here at the United Nations to honour the victims of Slavery including through the International Decade, the educational outreach activities for the Remember Slavery programme, and in any fora seeking to address the legacies of Slavery such as racism, racial discrimination, the contemporary forms of Slavery and human trafficking.

We acknowledge the tragedy, we consider the legacy, we will never forget.

I thank you.