

CONCEPT NOTE

SIDE EVENT TO THE 5TH SESSION OF UN PFPAD

Université Ouvrière de Genève, 3, place des Grottes - 1201 Geneva

15.4.2026, 16:30-19:00 Door Open (CET Geneva time)

REPARATORY JUSTICE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DECOLONISATION: HARVESTING THE LOW-HANGING FRUITS

1. Background and Rationale

A. Background

25.03.2026: On this International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans "*the gravest Crime against Humanity*" and calling for reparations "as a concrete step towards remedying historical wrongs." The resolution also urges "the prompt and unhindered restitution" of cultural items — including artworks, monuments, museum pieces, documents and national archives — to their countries of origin without charge.

In approving the resolution, the General Assembly affirms the importance of addressing the historical wrongs of slavery that promotes "justice, human rights, dignity and healing." The resolution calls on U.N. member nations to engage in talks "on **reparatory justice**, including a full and formal apology, measures of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, guarantees of non-repetition and changes to laws, programs and services to address racism and systemic discrimination."¹

This resolution serves not as an end-point, but as the beginning of the next leg of this journey. It expects us to go beyond "recognition", "apologies", and symbolic gestures. It requires us to divest from systems that have been complicit in the ongoing crimes and harms, and instead to build systems, structures, and institutions that affirm our human dignity, and our values.

17.11.2025: According to a recent publication on Reparatory Justice issued by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights², over **30 million** people were violently uprooted from Africa for enslavement. No country with a legacy of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism has fully confronted this past, accounted for the harms suffered and repaired its continuing negative impacts on Africans and people of African descent.

It further notes that global calls for reparatory justice have been growing. Some States, universities, religious groups and businesses that profited —or continue to profit— from

¹ <https://press.un.org/en/2026/ga12755.doc.htm>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/reparatory-justice-africans-and-people-african-descent-series> (17.11.2025)

legacies of enslavement and colonialism have suddenly started to act. Delivering reparatory justice is more urgent than ever. And human rights offer a powerful framework to move forward.

13.12.2024: This publication underscores the position of its earlier publication in December 2024³ which also focuses on reparatory justice for people of African descent. It acknowledges increased acceptance of the need to address the continuing impacts of enslavement and colonialism, including through reparatory justice. It reviews existing frameworks and initiatives and identifies areas for further consideration. It contains recommendations for States to take a comprehensive approach, grounded in international human rights law, that seeks to address legacies of the past in order to build societies that are free from systemic racism and racial discrimination. To achieve these objectives effectively, the approach should be participatory, gender-sensitive and inclusive, and should combine a plurality of measures, including, where appropriate, restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

Before the aforementioned UN interventions, Reparatory Justice has been a subject of public discourse in various international and regional fora.

21.08.2019: In 2019, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance described the issue of reparative justice as an "*urgent project*" to which the community of states must respond absolutely.⁴

07.08.2024: UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent⁵ emphasize the need for due recognition of the suffering inflicted on the victims of slavery, deportation and colonization as well as the need for structural reparation for the intergenerational damage caused by such acts.

08.09.2001: The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)⁶ recognised that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences. Furthermore, the effects and persistence of these structures and practices have been among the factors contributing to lasting social and economic inequalities in many parts of the world today.

17.11.2023: In 2023, at a conference co-organized by the Republic of Ghana and the African Union, African states adopted the Accra Proclamation on Reparations, which called for a united front for justice and reparations, including "*the exploration of legal and judicial options for reparations*"⁷

³ https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/reparatory-justice-people-african-descent?_cf_chl=tk=OXzAE1dn7TLvIQm7A7xfxjZghlMh5DjKDveWRXe4EGk-1772197651-1.0.1.1-oeyMuto2SpRApXrb8vFo22kaBba_sFwxLoaQFF2jEJ8 (13.12.2024).

⁴ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/74/321>

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5768-people-african-descent-report-permanent-forum-people-african>

⁶ Paragraphs 98 to 106 of the DDPA

<https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/background/durban-declaration-and-programme-of-action>

⁷ <https://au.int/fr/decisions/accra-proclamation-reparations>

16.02.2025: In line with this logic of obtaining reparations through the law, the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, upon a proposal by the Republic of Togo, adopted on 16 February 2025 a historic decision on the "*Qualification of slavery, deportation and colonization as crimes against humanity and genocide against the peoples of Africa*".⁸

14.11.2024 / 18.12.2025: This major decision is in line with the relevant resolution of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on reparations for Africans and people of African descent, adopted in 2024⁹ and the African Union's 2025 theme: "Justice for people of African descent through reparations", and the **declaration of 2026–2036 as the Decade of Reparations** on December 18, 2025.

09.09.2025: Last year, the African Union and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) held the *2nd Africa-CARICOM Summit* in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from September 7 to 9, 2025, to strengthen integration and cooperation between the two regions, particularly in the context of seeking reparations for historical wrongs. This common front tries to consolidate the shared commitment of both regions, drawing in particular on relevant initiatives within CARICOM such as the *CARICOM 10-point plan for reparatory justice* developed by the *CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC)*.

These initiatives are urgent appeals for a more committed and decisive international law, for the international recognition of the cruelty of these crimes and their fair legal qualification, and for the consolidation of the legitimate right to reparations.

23.10.2025: A High Level Event Organised on 23rd of October 2025 at the UN Office in Geneva by the Permanent Missions of the Republics of Togo, Ghana and South Africa in collaboration with Permanent Delegation of the African Union, and CARICOM coordination Office in Geneva centred on the theme *Consolidating the normative framework in the struggle for justice for the victims of slavery, deportation and colonization: Contribution of international law and UN mechanisms for just and lasting reparations*" also addressed the Reparatory Justice from the angle of the International Law and UN mechanisms.

08-12.12.2025: The High-Level Event was followed by the 9th Pan African Congress in Lome, the Republic of Togo, from 8-12 December 2025 under the theme "**Renewal of Pan Africanism and Africa's Role in the reform of Multilateral institutions: mobilising resources and reinventing ourselves to take action**". That time for action is now!

19.02.2026: In the 39th Session of the Assembly of the African Union, African leaders adopted a historic **resolution recognizing slavery and colonialism as crimes against humanity**, advancing Africa's demand for historical justice and reparations¹⁰

⁸ <https://diplomatie.gouv.tg/adoption-de-la-decision-sur-la-qualification-de-lesclavage-de-la-deportation-et-de-la-colonisation-comme-des-crimes-contre-lhumanite-et-de-genocide-contre-les-peuples-dafrique>

⁹ CADHP/Res.616 (LXXXI) 2024, November 14, 2024
<https://achpr.au.int/fr/adopted-resolutions/616-travers-des-consultations-sur-les-descendants-dafricains-lascendance-autoch>

¹⁰ <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2026/02/19/au-adopts-landmark-resolution-on-slavery-colonialism-and-reparatory-justice/>

05.12.2025: The Swiss Federal Council in its meeting of December 5, 2025, adopted the first national strategy against racism and anti-Semitism and gave a signal for the protection of the fundamental rights and human rights in our countries¹¹

13.09.2024: This comes after the country officially recognized its colonial past in September 2024 after the initial hesitations despite not belonging to the fleet of established colonial powers. The exhibition, “**colonial – Switzerland’s Global Entanglements**”, will be on display in an adapted form at the **Château de Prangins** from 27 March to 11 October 2026¹². Switzerland has also engaged in dialogue and serious negotiations for return of artefacts¹³

B. Rationale

Embedded within the framework of the 2nd International Decade for People of African Descent (2025-2034) proclaimed by the United Nations, under the theme “*People of African Descent: Consideration, Justice and Development*”¹⁴, the Side Event to the 5th Session of UN PFPAD aims at giving a voice particularly to the diplomatic corps, the Diaspora, the Civil Society and other major stakeholders to deepen an inclusive participation.

The Side event also seeks to resonate the recent declaration of the UN General Assembly declaring trafficking of enslaved Africans “*the gravest Crime against Humanity*” and the resolution of the 39th Session of the AU Assembly as well as the declaration of the Decade of Reparations (2026-2028), and amplify its implementation, and render international visibility to the Swiss national strategy against racism and anti-Semitism

II. Objectives

The principal objective of the Side Event is to sensitize and stimulate greater support and commitment to the AU Decade of Reparations (2026-2036), issue of reparations for Africans and People of African descent as victims of slavery, deportation and colonization, notably by expanding the scope of the dialogue to the Diaspora, Civil Society and other major stakeholders, for more inclusivity and participation in line with OHCHR recommendations on the subject matter.

The panel will also examine and confront the relationship between legacy of enslavement and colonialism, and internalized racism, racial trauma, horizontal violence and their effects on everyday life and highlights practical steps towards reparation. It will enhance the process towards formulating a participatory common position of the Swiss and the Global Diaspora on reparatory justice and practical steps to combating racism.

The panel will also harvest some “low-hanging fruits”, high-impact, achievable actions and evaluate different initiatives, instruments and the journey so far.

¹¹ [Le Conseil fédéral adopte la première stratégie nationale contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme](#)

¹² [colonial – Switzerland’s Global Entanglements](#)

¹³ [Swiss museums face up to their responsibilities](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/stories/2024/12/second-international-decade-people-african-descent-renews-call-recognition-justice>

III. Practical Information

Title of the Side Event	"Reparatory Justice within the context of Decolonisation: Harvesting the Low-Hanging Fruits"
Venue	Université Ouvrière de Genève 3, place des Grottes - 1201 Geneva Behind Geneva Main Train station (Gare Cornavin) www.uog.ch
Date and time	<i>15th of April 2026 / 16:30-19:00 (CET Geneva time)</i>
Format	The Side Event is composed of a Keynote, Inputs, followed by a panel discussion
Participation level	Swiss and Global African Diaspora, Delegates of the 5th Session of the UN PFPAD, Representatives of UN institutions and mechanisms (OHCHR, HRC), Ambassadors-Permanent Representatives, High-level Experts (Academia and Thinktanks), Reporting Committees and other relevant UN mechanisms, civil society and media organizations. Around 100 participants are expected to attend
Organizer(s) and stakeholders	African Diaspora Council of Switzerland, African Foundation for Migration and Development, Espace Afrique International

IV. Expected Outcomes and Impact

It is expected that the Side Event will produce the following outcomes:

- The position of the Global African Diaspora on Reparatory of harm, decolonisation and on combating racism better coordinated and enhanced.
- Specific low-hanging fruits recommendations on reparations and practical approach to combating racism through education are highlighted and submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, African Union, CARICOM and Swiss authorities.
- The united front for restorative justice for Africans and people of African descent is deepened, in accordance with the Accra Proclamation and the 39th AU General Assembly;
- Best practices and relevant projects on reparatory justice, decolonisation as well as combating racism are shared.

Draft programme

<p>Welcome Note & Introduction Moderation 5 mins</p>	<p>Host: Dozie Celeste Ugochukwu, African Diaspora Council of Switzerland</p>	<p>Prof Dèlidji Eric DEGILA, PhD, Professor of Practice of International Relations, Geneva Graduate Institute</p> <p>Moderation</p>
<p>Opening Remark 10 mins</p>	<p><i>Tracing the official position of the African Union on Reparatory Justice</i></p>	<p>H.E. Dr Girma Amente Nono, African Union Permanent Delegation to UN and other Int. Organizations.</p>
<p>1st Input 15 mins</p>	<p><i>Significance of the recent declaration of the UN General Assembly declaring trafficking of enslaved Africans "the gravest Crime against Humanity"</i></p>	<p>H.E. Mr. E. Kwame Asiedu ANTWI Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of the Republic of Ghana to the United Nations Office and other intl. organizations in Geneva (tbc)</p>
<p>2nd Input 15 mins</p>	<p><i>Navigating the Reparation strategy and expected outcomes</i></p>	<p>Mr. Badibalaki WEMBIE, chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Togo to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva</p>
<p>The panel Discussion 40 mins</p>	<p>Examination of Reparatory Justice and Decolonisation from perspectives of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International relations ▪ Intellectual property ▪ Diaspora and Civil society 	<p>The panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dr Botoy Elangi, Industrial Property Information Officer, Technology and Innovation Support Division, IP & Innovation Ecosystems Sector, WIPO ○ Awa N'Diaye, President, Diaspora expert, Espace Afrique International ○ Danielle Isler, Doctoral candidate, Scholar and Activist for Racial Equity, Expert and Consultant in Race Criticality, Anti-Racism, Decolonial & Postcolonial Thinking and Practice, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion ○ Dr Ebrima Sall, Co-convener, CEO TrustAfrica, Dakar, Senegal ○ Dr Daniel Mekonnen, Independent Consultant & Researcher, International Human Rights Law, Geneva

Conversation with participants 30 mins	All participants	
Conclusion and closing remark 5 mins		