



# **Communique following the African-Caribbean Dialogue on Justice through Reparations**

2-3 June 2025,

*Future Africa Campus,  
University of Pretoria,  
South Africa*



1. The African Union (AU) declared 2025 as the “Year of Reparations” under the theme “Advancing Justice through Reparations: Reparations, Restoration, and Renaissance”. Reparations for historical injustices and human rights violations due to slavery, colonialism, and other forms of exploitation against people of African descent is one the burning issues of our time. This conference, the African-Caribbean Dialogue on justice through reparations, was a call to explore justice through reparations: which brought together in Pretoria 95 scholars, practitioners and students from across Africa, the Caribbean and Europe, with 165 scholars joining online. Over the two-day conference, 35 papers were presented, as set out in the **programme**.
2. The organisers were the University of Pretoria (Centre for Human Rights and the South African National Research Foundation Chair in International Constitutional Law), the University of The Bahamas and the University of Goma. The Bahamas National Reparations Committee, Africa Judges and Jurists Forum, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent supported the event. The African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child collaborated on the event. These three African Union human rights bodies collaborate on the publication of the *African Human Rights Yearbook*, in which selected papers presented at the conference will be published.
3. The topics discussed include African-Caribbean connections, the conceptual framing and ambiguities of reparations, African case studies, the gendered dynamics of harm and reparations, land rights and reparations, reparations and culture, human rights, health, the environment and climate, and actors for reparations beyond the state. Among these topics, three key themes emerged.
4. First, the current framework of international law is limited in its capacity to provide justice for those who were subjected to racialization, enslavement, and colonialism. Legal reparations for the enslavement and the trade and trafficking of enslaved Africans and people of African descent and colonisation are often blocked on the basis of retroactivity, but research indicates that the impact of transatlantic slavery and colonisation is continuing, and legal outcomes often rely on political economy power.

- Colonisation is not defined as a crime against humanity on its own terms, causing legal reparation claims to focus on crimes that happened during colonisation, like torture, rather than colonisation itself; individualised and not systemic. It is widely recognised that this has contributed to the limitations of reparations to date, which have been symbolic rather than transformative, sometimes failing even to involve and give an effective voice to affected groups within negotiations.
5. Second, reparations are a bridge from historical injustice to collective healing. African and Caribbean nations must push for international recognition that colonisation and slavery have caused diverse harms, including racialised violence, land dispossession, underdevelopment and ongoing loss and damage from the climate crisis. Harms caused are intersectional, disproportionately impacting certain populations like women, children, the youth, indigenous peoples and minority groups. Insecure land tenure rights followed colonial land dispossession in Africa, and populations continue to be affected by psychological trauma and the socio-economic impact of natural disasters.
  6. Third, the ongoing legacy of colonialism is perpetuated in discourses, epistemologies and institutions dominated by the global North. It is reflected in enduring structural inequalities reinforced by international financial institutions, debt burdens and resource export dependence. This colonality also permeates climate governance and climate action, including through offsets, net zero strategies, carbon markets and debt-based finance. Together, these dynamics underscore the urgent need to decolonize global systems through reparatory justice.
- ### Conclusions and recommendations
7. We, participants in the African-Caribbean Dialogue on Justice Through Reparations, welcome the African Union's declaration of 2025 as the "Year of Reparations" under the theme "Advancing Justice through Reparations: Reparations, Restoration, and Renaissance". We welcome the progress made in establishing clear objectives for the year, including the establishment of a Committee of Experts on Reparations, an Africa Reparations Fund, partnerships with CARICOM, and the African Diaspora, as well as committing to strengthen

collaboration between civil society, governments, religious organisations to advance reparatory justice.

8. We encourage the African Union to build on this commitment by working to define the harms of colonisation that need redress, particularly land expropriation and underdevelopment, within its own version of a 10-point plan. As the African Union develops an African position on reparations, we encourage it to coordinate the effective participation of the range of actors affected by or redressing these broad harms, from the African Development Bank to representatives of indigenous groups and young people. We encourage African states to push for recognition of the link between transatlantic slavery, colonisation and underdevelopment in the draft UN Convention on the Right to Development.
9. We further urge the African Union to consider providing institutional support for a cohort of states or civil organisations taking forward legal claims, and funding research efforts that document and build out an African understanding of historical wrongs. This could happen in partnership with the University of the West Indies, the University of the Bahamas and other Caribbean institutions. In addition to engaging in legal redress with former colonial powers, the AU could also coordinate and support African states to revise domestic colonial law that remain active within current legal frameworks, support the integration of living customary law, and work to strengthen indigenous land rights.
10. Recognising that African, Caribbean and European scholars can provide a crucial role for academics as allies in the fight to right these historical wrongs and remaining injustices, we agree to explore further avenues for fuller engagement of and collaboration between the University of Pretoria, University of Goma and the University of the Bahamas, and others, in deepening understanding of reparations through research, publications, discourse, awareness raising and other strategic measures to accelerate the reality of reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent in the continent and the diaspora. Participants agree to explore the opportunity for dialogue with universities in former colonial powers.
11. We urge the African human rights bodies and members of the African legal profession to engage more fully and proactively with the issue of reparations, to affirm it as a

- human rights issue. In particular, we recommend that the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights provides guidance on the obligation of state parties, derived from Article 22 of the Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to ensure the restitution of cultural property illegally removed from Africa.
12. We encourage African states to consider establishing National Reparations Committees, mirroring the model developed in the Caribbean to respond to the differentiated impacts of transatlantic slavery and colonisation and develop national pathways sensitive to its unique histories and the ongoing need for reparatory justice. African scholars and bodies should also collaborate with the UN Working Group on People of African Descent, now and in the future.
  13. We applaud CARICOM on the 10-Point Plan on Reparatory Justice, and the revisions envisaged to pay attention to diversity and inclusion, particularly in relation to gender and marginalised groups. We support this commitment, recognising that the plan would benefit from explicit consideration of the differentiated impact of slavery on women, indigenous people and indentured Asians in the Caribbean.
  14. We welcome the second international decade for people of African-descent (2025-2034) and see this as an opportunity to advance the human rights, lives and livelihoods of Africans and people of African-descent, including women and girls of African descent, through reparations, sustainable development, and other processes framed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We expect that all Africans, and not only those in the diaspora, will actively participate and benefit from the programme of activities for the second decade. We continue to encourage African and Caribbean scholars to work in collaboration with the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent towards the elaboration of the Declaration on the Human Rights of People of African Descent, the collection of data, and development of programmes to address systemic racism and enhance the progress of reparative justice.