

Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth & Recreation
The Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Statement of the African Association of St. Thomas/St. John on the
International Decade for People of African Descent

On behalf of the African Association of St. Thomas-St. John, it is my honor to join you at this important hearing to discuss the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent in the Virgin Islands. My name is Kelechukwu Chidi Onyejekwe. I am a member of the African Association. I speak on behalf of Professor Solomon Kabuka, our President who is off island. He sends his greetings and congratulates Senator Myron D. Jackson for convening this hearing.

Action to implement the Decade for People of African Descent is taking place around the world triggered by the decision of the General Assembly in December 2013 to designate the ten-year period starting from the 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent.. Therefore, this meeting is timely. The African Association supports with enthusiasm the proposed *Resolution petitioning the Governor to join with the Legislature in developing a comprehensive program on education and awareness of the contributions of people of African descent throughout the Caribbean.* This resolution brings us together with the objective of promoting respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for people of African descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

About 200 million people of African descent live across the Americas. Many millions more live outside Africa. Based on a foundation of human rights, the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance recognized the impact of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism on African Descendants. The follow up Durban Review Conference in 2009 acknowledged that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism, and of their consequences. Further, People of African descent experience discrimination and inequality, resulting in limited access to quality education, employment, security and vulnerability to violence based on color or ethnicity.

The UN International Decade for People of African Descent is an opportunity for the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join with people of African descent to implement a Program of Action, which was designed around the central themes of “recognition, justice and development.” Successful implementation of the goals of this decade will make this territory and the rest of the world a better place for all humankind.

The African Association of St. Thomas and St. John holds public events to highlight the life and culture of Africans. Our members go to schools to share the positive history of positive African peoples. We plan to highlight the purposes of the decade in our endeavors. In addition, for over a decade, the Association established and has been bestowing the African Humanitarian Award upon persons of the highest achievement in promoting the interest of

People of African Descent. Honorees have included Charles Westley Turnbull, former Governor of the Virgin Islands and the late Ambassador Terence Todman.

We support this legislation with enthusiasm, and our members will participate in the Decade's activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development.

I thank you again for the opportunity for me to speak today.