

***PRESS ARTICLE
OF THE
ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE
THAT ACCOMPANY THE
THE HAGUE DECLARATION***



EPAF-PAD

Europe Pan-African Forum for
People of African Descent

Pan-African Civil Society Convenes in The Hague to Forge Systemic Reparatory Justice Agenda

THE HAGUE, Netherlands - September 3, 2025 –“Building Power for Reparatory Justice: A Europe Region Civil Society and CARICOM Reparations Commission Roundtable Dialogue” concluded in The Hague after two powerful days of exchanges between Pan-African Civil Society Leaders, CARICOM officials, the African Union, and UN delegates.

The Dialogue was convened by: the National Platform Dutch Slavery Past (an associate member organisation of the Caricom Reparations Commission), Europe Pan-African Forum for People of African Descent (EPAF-PAD), and the CARICOM Reparations Commission, in cooperation with several other partners. This historic Roundtable sought to move beyond apologies, and towards actionable structures of systemic redress.

Held in the symbolic “City of Peace and Justice”, the two-day conference brought together over the two days, over 76 delegates and institutional representatives from across Europe and Abroad to strategize and find ways of legally, technologically, and economically dismantle the legacies of slavery and colonialism.

The Hague Roundtable was attended by some interesting participants like **Mr. Frank O'Carroll** of the Repair Campaign. Mr. O'Carroll on introducing himself was asked about the Repair Campaign by the Moderator of Day 1, **Dr. Nii Hammond**. He explained the goals and strategies of the Repair Campaign. During the Event he was approached by many of the participants from several European nation states to discuss how the work of the Repair Campaign could enhance their own country's specific efforts. Mr. O'Carroll's solidarity with the Event was well received and appreciated.

IMPRESSION OF DAY 1:

Dr. Barryl Biekman: “Nothing about us, without us.”

Chair of the National Platform Dutch Slavery Past and co-initiator and organiser of the Dialogue, opened the Roundtable with this powerful invocation: “Nothing about us, without us.

In her Welcome Remarks she underscored the urgency of legally codifying state apologies: “We must move from symbolism to structure – from declarations to institutional guarantees.” In this context she highlighted the Dutch’s apologies, visions and standpoints with reference to the Joint Netherlands Legal Institutionalization Initiative (2023), and highlighted her leadership in advancing the Declaration on African Indigeneity and Land Reparations (April 2025), co-sponsored by the Kingdom of Kush and the AU African Diaspora Sixth Region High Council and the many other initiatives on Local, National, Europe and Global level.

She then welcomed the participants with special attention to:

- The National Delegates of the Europe Pan African Forum For People of African Descent.
- His Excellency Mr. William Charles Manful, Deputy Head of Mission of the Republic of Ghana to the Netherlands: “Your presence manifests the value that the Republic of Ghana, as the coordinating African Union member state attaches to Reparatory Justice and its commitment to the voices of the Global African Diaspora with regards to the decision-making processes in the context of the Reparatory Justice Roadmap”, she stipulated. “Nothing about us, without us, in this regards we wish to recall our request in recognising Ghana’s leadership in the African Union’s Reparations Roadmap, to integrate the name of the AUADS 6th Region High Council as a concrete African Civil Society Diaspora Partner in the text of the Roadmap”.
- A special welcome to Dr. Doudou Diene from France - Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. Dr Dienne is former Director of UNESCO's Department of Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue and responsible for the UNESCO Slave Route project. He is a board member and rapporteur of the prestigious French National Organization, "Memory of Slavery".

- To Grand Master teacher in the field of Reparatory Justice, Mrs. Esther Xosei. "I Welcome you and thank you for your great merits in the field of this unruly subject. Your struggle for Reparatory Justice in Europe and Global context has not escaped people's attention. "

- To the Vice-Chairs of the CARICOM Reparation Commission:
Ambassador Dr. Dorbrene O'Marde "a committed authority when it comes to the voices of the Civil Society, to be here with us shows your deeply rooted commitment."

Chief Eric Philips for his "immense contribution and support in all circumstances in the field of Civil Society involvement. We owe you deep respect for your intense support and expertise to move the conversation from a Caribbean level to a Europe Civil Society level. "

- Drs. Armand Zunder of the National Reparation Commission of Republic Suriname "a special welcome and honor for your life long dedication and achievements in the field of Reparatory Justice with special attention for the crimes committed by the Dutch in Suriname."
- Mrs. Miriam Ekiudoko – United Nations Special Envoy, Focal point for Europe in the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, "your presence is an important sign that the Working Group cares."
- Mrs. Mandisa Batiste, Grand Master Teacher on AI. "we are happy with your presence, and are sure that after the two days we would have learned a lot more about AI and the steps to be taken in the context of our own Reparatory Justice mission."
- A special welcome to Drs. Rabin Baldewsingh - State Commissioner of the National Anti-Racism and Discrimination Coordination Government Body, and words of great thanks and applause for his support with the venue, logistics and lunch.
- To Mr. Kofi Agun, Board member of the National institute Dutch Slavery Past and its Heritage and Mrs. Nilza Pinto, Manager Complaints Handling of Radar Foundation and National Anti-Discrimination Knowledge Centre Art 1 extra words of thanks for the immaterial support.

Key Speakers Delivered Urgent Calls for Justice, Sovereignty, and Structural Change

Ambassador Dr. Dorbrene O'Marde - "A Call for Unity and Strategic Coherence"

In his opening remarks, Ambassador, Dr. Dorbrene O'Marde, and Vice Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, emphasised the critical importance of unity among the African Diaspora in Europe, the CARICOM Reparations Commission, and their counterparts in the African Union and Latin America. He reaffirmed that partnership across these global African communities is essential for a coherent and impactful reparatory justice movement.

Dr. O'Marde highlighted the CARICOM 10-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice as a foundational framework for collaboration, noting that the newly revised version now explicitly includes Women and the African Diaspora as key stakeholders in the reparation's agenda.

Dr. Rabin Baldewsingh - "Reparatory justice is not charity - it is an obligation under international law."

The State Commissioner of the Netherlands' National Anti-Racism and Discrimination Coordination Body delivered a powerful call for action: "The Netherlands must undergo a radical reorientation, one that prioritises systemic policy change over symbolic recognition."

He declared: "Reparatory justice is not charity, nor an act of goodwill - it is a demand grounded in international law, human rights, and moral responsibility. Structural change has never come from governments voluntarily. It has always come from united advocacy that is organised in sustained, collective pressure." Here in The Netherlands, to make a structural difference in the improvement and protection of Black rights necessitates a radical reorientation towards shaping meaningful policy that prioritises systemic change rather than symbolic recognition."

He advised: "to move beyond symbolism, I believe the Netherlands needs a deeply embedded understanding of how reparatory justice is not charity, or an act of goodwill from governments or institutions. But that it is a demand rooted in international law, through human rights and moral responsibility. We must remember that structural change has never come from governments voluntarily. It has always come from united advocacy; from organised, sustained, collective pressure. That is why this conference was so important and urgent. Only broadly supported approaches towards reparatory justice - built with active participation from Afro-diasporic communities - can lead to real change."

Ms. Bridget Ohabuche: “ The Youth’s Central Role in the Fight for Reparations & Reparatory Justice”

In her statement, Ms. Ohabuche EPAFPAD, Representative for Italy and Coordinator of the Youth Division, emphasized the importance of Uniting the Voices of Youth. Her remarks focused particularly on youth participation in Reparations and Reparatory Justice within the framework of the United Nations’ Second International Decade for People of African Descent and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), highlighting the urgent need for intergenerational dialogue. “Youth should not be merely beneficiaries of reparatory justice—they should play a central role in its architecture and fight. Uniting the voices of young people of African descent must become a dynamic force for transformative change.”

Mrs. Esther Xosei – “Justice begins where state dependency ends.”

Jurist Consult and Grand Master Teacher on Reparatory Justice, Mrs. Xosei grounded her contribution in African philosophical frameworks:

“We must build partnerships based on mutual learning, recognition, and the principles of Maat and Ubuntu.”

Rejecting state paternalism, she stated: “The future of justice lies not in state dependency, but in supporting the autonomous power of affected communities to repair, organise, and transform their own circumstances.”

She affirmed the rights of communities to:

1. Self-determination in defining their needs and solutions;
2. Independence from state and regional control;
3. Equality in all institutional engagements;
4. And Autonomy in organising and managing resources.

Mr. William Charles Manful – ‘Ghana’s Call for Reparatory Justice’

Speaking on behalf of the Government of Ghana, Mr. William Charles Manful, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Ghana to the Netherlands, statement reaffirmed Ghana’s historic leadership on reparatory justice. Representing H.E. Francis Kotia, Ambassador of Ghana to the Netherlands, he emphasised that reparations are not merely symbolic, but a practical and moral imperative.

“For centuries systems of slavery, systemic racism, colonisation, neo-colonisation, genocide have enriched some while impoverishing others... reparations are not about guilt, they are about responsibility. They are not about division but rather healing and atonement for a past that to this day continues to impact the present.”

Mr. Manful underscored Ghana’s pivotal role as coordinator of the African Union’s reparations campaign, recalling the landmark 2023 Accra Reparations Conference, which united African heads of state, scholars, and representatives of the global African diaspora to advance the reparations movement. He stressed that reparatory justice must encompass financial compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition. Concluding with a firm reminder, Mr. Manful stated:

“The call for reparations must not be treated as a peripheral or auxiliary demand. It has to be seen as a moral imperative that seeks reconciliation, dignity and peace.”

Mrs. Miriam Ekiudoko – "Racism is not a closed chapter, it is a daily reality."

Speaking on behalf of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Ekiudoko delivered a stirring message of transnational solidarity:

“Whether in Accra or Kingston, Port-au-Prince or London, Rio or the most remote Caribbean village – we remain one African family, bound by history, resilience, and shared destiny.” She declared: “Haiti paid the highest price for freedom. Reparations for Haiti are not optional – they are essential to justice for all people of African descent.”

Mr. Bright Sefah, African Union Policy Officer, ECOSOCC Division in his Solidarity Remarks, congratulated the Europe Pan African Forum Facilitators, on behalf of his Staff, with the organisation of this important event. He then highlighted African Union's Reparatory Justice Roadmap with special attention to the Policies and Strategies of the ECOSOCC Division and in this regards the implementation strategies of the 20 reserved Seats for the African Diaspora per Region.

Dr. Doudou Diene - **"Deeper historical knowledge is deeper self-knowledge, and thus self-empowerment as transformative force for reparatory justice;**

In his Keynote Address he concentrated on two main topics:

- **The implementation of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent:**

"The Importance is that on a national level Afrodescendants must reunite, mobilize and coordinate its different components with the aim of presenting a united front in the implementation of the UN Decade of Afrodescendants. Afrodescendants communities have been divided by history, geography and the ideology of racism. The first step is for each national Afrodescendant community to organize itself in a four-way process: identify its members, create an organizational and representative structure, assess and document as completely as possible the political, social, human and cultural problems the community is facing, and finally elaborate the most appropriate solutions to these problems. The second step is to elaborate a strategy to mobilize the Government for the implementation of the UN Decade which has approved at the level of the United Nations General Assembly. The central objective is to make the UN Decade a national cause which concern the Afrodescendant community and includes all necessary stakeholders. The Government should be requested to promote the elaboration of a national programme of action for the UN Decade, articulated around the following main actions: public political support for the UN Decade, provision of legal, material and financial resources for the programme of action, promote a regional coordination and collaboration for the Decade and promote the implementation of the Decade at the level of all institutions and organizations of the UN system competent on the economic, social, cultural, educational, health and labour fields."

- **Reparatory Justice**

Reparations of the profound legacies of slavery should be achieved through the following dimensions:

Moral and ethical reparation by the formal inclusion in the national legislation of the recognition of slavery and in particular the Atlantic slave trade, as a crime against humanity, in line with the unanimously adopted Declaration and Programme of Action of Durban (sept 2001).

Historic reparation by the scientific documentation of this crime against humanity with the promotion at the national level of university research, study and publication on slavery. A key dimension of the historic reparation should be to critically assess the role and place of Afrodescendants in the construction of the national identity which imply the rewriting and teaching of the national history.

Educational reparation by the teaching on slavery on the basis of the results of the scholarly researched documentation.

Economic reparation by researching and documenting the impact of the four centuries of slavery both on the prosperity of European and American societies and the underdevelopment of African societies.

Social reparation by the research and documentation of the reality of the tight juxtaposition of two maps: the social, economic and political marginalisation map with the map of the communities historically victims of slavery, in particular Afrodescendants."

IMPRESSION OF DAY 2

Dr. Angela Sayles: “Advancing Economic Justice through Ubuntunomics”

Day Two of the Roundtable was expertly moderated by Dr. Angela Sayles, a member of the Board of Directors of the African Union African Diaspora Sixth Region High Council. She also facilitated one of three critical parallel breakout sessions focused on evaluating and reimagining the CARICOM–Europe relationship. A champion of the emerging economic framework known as Ubuntunomics – rooted in the African philosophy of “I am because we are.” Dr. Sayles has been instrumental in integrating principles of collective care and reciprocity into reparatory justice strategies. Her interventions linked economic theory with grounded, community-driven models for sustainable redress.

Chief Eric Phillips – “Chattel slavery was the world’s first nuclear bomb. Racism was the second.”

The Vice Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission and Chair of the Guyana Reparations Committee urged collective mobilisation under a global Pan-African identity:

“We are not here as Diaspora Caribbean, Diaspora Europe, or Diaspora Africa, we are here as Africans, as Claimants, as Forces of Transformation.”

Calling out what he termed the “Magnificent Masquerade” of European denial, he stated:

“The real crisis of our time is not memory, it is measurement. Not guilt, but accountability. The problem of the 21st century is not colour; it is uncorrected theft.”

He denounced token gestures and declared: “We will not walk away with apologies alone. That would be a further injustice, a further crime.”

Phillips outlined CARICOM’s Triple-A Strategy:

1. Developmental Justice
2. Diplomatic Engagement
3. Legal Architecture

“Let 2025 mark the end of the era of ‘maybe’, and the beginning of measured reparatory justice.” He closed with a resonant call:

“One Africa. One Global Diaspora. One Future.”

Dr. Nii Hammond – who moderated the Dialogue on the first Day, a quote: “Excellencies brothers and sisters. For us in the Diaspora, the CARICOM Ten-Point Plan must become our new Ten Commandments—a guide to truth, repair, and action. We must remember that the descendants of the Berlin Conference still cling to the wealth and power they carved for themselves by dividing Africa. But today, together, as one African family, we can build the strength to reclaim justice and shape a future worthy of our children.” He echoed and reinforced a critical proposal raised by Chief Eric Phillips: “A serious starting point for reparations must be calculated over 400 years of GDP extraction – a metric that transforms historical injustice into economic accountability.”

Ms. Mandisa Baptiste – ‘Call to Digital Arms’

In her presentation, “AI For Reparatory Justice: Co-Creating a Just World with Ubuntu Philosophy & AI Tools”, the AI entrepreneur and advocate, urged African-descended nations to reframe the reparations discourse through data sovereignty and technological ownership.

“We cannot speak of land rights without also speaking of data rights,” she stressed.

The tech CEO also called for more strategic investment in:

- I. African-owned data centres,
- II. Afrocentric data architectures,
- III. and sovereign AI tools that reflect the realities of African and Afrodescendant communities.

“The ownership of data today is equivalent to the ownership of land during slavery. It determines who has power, who is seen, and who is silenced.”

Mrs. Mila Paspalanova - United Nations Commissioner of Human Rights Regional Office for Europe on **“Reparatory Justice: Transforming Legacies, Building the Future”** brought in memory that: “The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) underlined the urgent need for reparatory justice to restore dignity, achieve reconciliation, and dismantle systemic racism affecting Africans and people of African descent. Reparatory justice, OHCHR emphasized, is not only about redressing the past but also about transforming the future by creating societies built on equality, resilience, and non-discrimination.

The new OHCHR report released on 3rd September 2025 highlights that legacies of enslavement, colonialism, and racially discriminatory policies continue to shape institutions, structures, and systems today. While awareness and calls for reparations are increasing, steps taken so far remain limited, and in some contexts, commitments to racial justice are being rolled back. The UN High Commissioner and Secretary-General have both stressed that reparatory justice must be a comprehensive, multi-layered process, tailored to national contexts yet grounded in international human rights standards. OHCHR urged States to adopt a holistic approach that combines formal apologies, truth-telling initiatives, restitution, compensation, memorialization, education, and psychosocial support.

Crucially, people of African descent must guide and participate effectively in shaping and implementing these processes. The call extends beyond governments: civil society, religious groups, and businesses are invited to acknowledge their historical roles, engage in truth-telling, and contribute to broader societal recognition and transformation. The issue has gained momentum across the UN system, including through the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is drafting guidance on reparations. International and inter-State cooperation, including with the African Union, is also essential to ensure accountability and meaningful change. Finally, it is vital that the European Union addresses reparatory justice fully and adequately in its forthcoming 2026–2030 EU Anti-Racism Strategy, ensuring it reflects all international obligations binding on EU member states.”

Drs. Armand Zunder - Chair of the Suriname National Reparations Commission

In his final response congratulated the CRC and the organizations led by Dr. Barryl Biekman. "Congratulations on the organisation and participation of motivated contemporary pioneers from many European countries who participated in this conference. I consider the results of this conference as a challenge to intensify the process of raising awareness of the consequences of the transatlantic slavery past towards the numerous citizens in our countries of origin and in the Diaspora."

International Contributions and Country Engagement

Delegates from across Europe provided important national perspectives on their countries' involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, and colonialism. Contributions including the national policies with regards to Reparatory Justice came from representatives of Great Britain (**Mrs. Esther Xosei**), France (**Dr. Doudou Diene**), Belgium (**Mrs. Modi Ntambwe**), the Netherlands including the Dutch Caribbeans (**Mr. Iwan Leeuwin**), Norway (**Ms. Mandisa Baptiste**), Luxembourg's (**Mrs. Marissa Daruwala**) contribution was gratefully acknowledged for the insights, Germany (**Dr. Amina Tall**) gave an extensive lecture on Germany's in all the aspects of concern, Italy (**Ms. Bridget Ohabuche**) concentrated on the role of the Vatican and the Vatican City, Sweden (**Mr. Jan Lonn**), deepening the collective understanding of Europe's shared responsibility. In this regard he reflected on Denmark's historical role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, including Norway's integrated participation under the Danish crown. Delegates also discussed how certain Eastern European nations, such as Austria and Hungary (**Mrs. Miriam Ekiudoko**), benefited economically from the slave-based system.

With respect to the Netherlands, many noted the disproportionately large role played by the country despite its size. A compelling presentation on Switzerland highlighted how Swiss bankers and commercial interests were deeply connected to the French slave trade, with Switzerland's economy at the time significantly shaped by these crimes against humanity. Spain's role (Dr. Antumi Toasijé) was also recognised, though time constraints prevented a full presentation. Portugal's particularly early and devastating role in initiating and sustaining the trans-Atlantic slave trade remains a matter of grave concern, and further coalition confirmation on contemporary Portuguese policies is awaited.

Presentation and adoption of the Draft Declaration

In connection with the approval, the Concept was presented to the participants, by reading page by page and finally approved by means of applause. Participants were then given the opportunity to submit any amendments within a week, after which the Text was officially adopted.

Closing remarks.

In his closing reflections, **Ambassador O'Marde** expressed his deep satisfaction with the outcomes of the two-day Roundtable, commending the quality of the dialogue, the spirit of cooperation, and the depth of information shared. He pledged to relay the key outcomes to the CARICOM Reparations Commission and affirmed that the objectives of the convening had been fulfilled "in both content and spirit." He closed by thanking the organisers for their vision, dedication, and hard work in making the event a success.

Mr. Iwan Leeuwin, member of the National Reparations Commission NL

".....First of all, I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Barryl Biekman. Dr. Biekman for decades has shown during several occasions what she is capable of, able to move mountains, so to speak. This successful Roundtable Dialogue highlights Dr. Biekman's capabilities, capacities and expertise in engagement strategies and her deep-rooted belief in a coordinated, structured, cohesive, integrated approach. Implementation strategies are her main focus. I have witnessed her major role as initiator of the national slavery monument and her role for decades for Reparatory Justice and then the realization of the AUADS 6th Region High Council and the Europe Pan African Forum for People of African Descent. I am very impressed by the results of these two days; the unity that I have experienced, the inspiration and dedication. What we have all achieved within this two days can be defined as a milestone. On behalf of the National Reparation Commission NL, I would like to thank you all."

Dr. Barryl Biekman underscored the importance of this collective truth-telling, stating: “We must move from symbolism to structure, from declarations to institutional guarantees.” She emphasised that the testimonies shared by delegates reaffirm the central message of the Dialogue: that Reparatory Justice must be rooted in facts, measured in accountability, and pursued with unity of purpose.

For information

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