

STATEMENT BY DR. ASHWANI KUMAR, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT & MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 120 – ‘FOLLOW-UP TO THE COMMEMORATION OF THE TWO-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE – AT THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 21, 2013

Mr. President,

I would like to welcome the Secretary General’s report on the ‘Program of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery’ and for his Status Report on the UN Trust Fund for Partnerships for the Permanent Memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.



Mr. President,

Transatlantic slave trade is one of the most abhorrent chapters in the history of mankind. It ravaged the African and the Caribbean nations to satisfy the rapacious economic greed and exploitation of the colonizers. The lingering consequences of its brutality and human suffering are visible even today.

We must all take initiatives to ensure that future generations do not forget the grief and tragedy borne by the countless nameless victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It is equally imperative that the international community takes upon itself the commitment that such crimes against humanity never recur.

Education has a critical role in creating awareness amongst present and future generations, about the history, causes and impact of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. A better understanding of history provides a valuable perspective in confronting current challenges.

Mr. President,

India welcomes the various outreach activities and programmes organized by the Department of Public Information to commemorate the “International Day of Remembrance” at the UN as well as in other countries through its network of UN information centres and partner organizations in March 2013.

We stress the need for regular and adequate financial allocation to the Department of Public Information in organising these events.

We also welcome the initiatives undertaken by States in reaffirming their commitment to implement paragraphs 101 and 102 of the Durban Declaration aimed at countering the legacy of slavery and honoring the memory of the victims of slavery and the slave trade.

Mr. President,

The construction of a Permanent Memorial will be a fitting tribute by the United Nations to the millions of victims of the transatlantic slave trade. We are pleased to note that the international design competition to finalize the memorial design has been concluded and that the UN Secretary General and the President of the General Assembly unveiled the winning design in September this year.

With a contribution of US \$ 260,000/-, India is the lead contributor to the “United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships – Permanent Memorial” for receiving contributions to erect the Permanent Memorial. The Trust Fund has, however, so far received only close to US \$ 1.4 million against the anticipated expenditure of US \$ 4.5 million for the construction of the Memorial. We, therefore, strongly urge all countries, and in particular those who derived material gains from the transatlantic trade, to contribute generously to the Fund to show their earnest acceptance that wrongs were committed and that there is a sense of repentance.

Mr. President,

As we recall the struggle, the degradation and the deaths of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, we hope that the Permanent Memorial can be constructed at an early date. It will be a small commemoration for the struggle of the victims who suffered silently with no hope for freedom before they disappeared into the night.

We have a chance to pay our humble tribute to the victims, who suffered this disgrace by generously contributing to the Trust Fund.

This, Mr. President, is the least we can do.

Thank you.

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