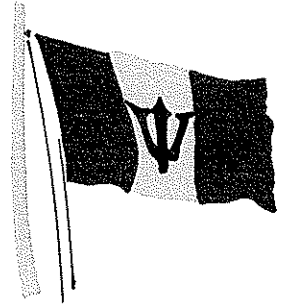




*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



STATEMENT

BY

**HON. STEPHEN LASHLEY
MINISTER OF FAMILY, CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH
BARBADOS**

AT THE

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO COMMEMORATE THE
TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE DURBAN
DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

ON

SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

**United Nations Headquarters
New York**

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

“Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war, and until the colour of a man’s skin is no more significant than the colour of his eyes, everywhere is war, and until there is no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation.....it is war....”

These words of the Emperor Haile Selassie I, made famous by the late great West Indian superstar Bob “Nesta” Marley in the song “War”, remain relevant to us as we assemble here today at the United Nations to once again confront the scourge of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Indeed, it has been one full decade since the majority of the world’s nations gathered in Durban, South Africa to boldly declare their determination to prevent and combat racial discrimination and, in order to further this ideal, to embark on a programme of action to eliminate globally all those inhumane acts, whether gross or subtle, which find their basis, ironically, in the wonderful diversity that makes us human.

It was then that the historic call was made for us to stretch our collective imagination towards the highest and purest ideals of what it means to be human, to be humane, and to engage in just action irrespective of race, colour, descent or ethnic origin.

Today, forty-two years after the International Convention on the Elimination of all Form of Racial Discrimination, and ten years after the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, we need to use this United Nations High Level meeting to provide greater hope to the voiceless and helpless affected by racism.

How do we achieve that? Race, as well as gender, stand out as the two most enduring, effective but socially debilitating inventions because they are attached to persistent properties of difference inherent in our bodies.

Widely recognised as a root cause of war and inhumanity, racial discrimination must therefore be given the highest priority and the resources required to properly address its perpetuation and its consequences. The challenge will be inherently

difficult and complex, but not insurmountable, if we remain focused, fair and relevant.

Seized of the challenges and complexity, Barbados was fully engaged in the process of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and continues its support of the Declaration and Programme of Action as well as the Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference in 2009.

Barbados welcomes the progress being made to implement one of the tangible outcomes of the Durban Conference, namely the project to erect, in a prominent place at the United Nations, a Permanent Memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We commend the Permanent Memorial Committee and all those who have contributed to the project. We look forward with great anticipation to the day when the Permanent Memorial is unveiled here at United Nations headquarters.

Mr Chairman,

Barbados shares with other Caribbean nations the inhuman and criminal experiences of the transatlantic slave trade in Africans, chattel slavery practised in plantation societies, and colonialism. As such, the right of our citizens to live free from discrimination on the basis of race, colour, class, creed and religion has been entrenched in our Constitution.

No society is free from racism and discrimination. However, I assure this Meeting that the Government of Barbados remains committed to eradicating this scourge wherever it may occur.

The negative consequences of racial discrimination in its various forms pervade our societies because effective social control during slavery and colonialism used the weapons of culture, language, texts, and other mechanisms of governance to establish and maintain the Euro-centric hierarchy and authority necessary to rule and exploit the victims who were, in the overwhelming majority, people of African descent.

European standards which relate to culture, beauty, values, morality and self-worth displaced African and indigenous standards through their inscription in religious rituals, cultural acts, the literary canon, language, laws, and social relationships.

We therefore renew our call for significant resources to be allocated to fund national, regional and international multi-ethnic research centres to develop new conceptual tools for understanding the complex nature of racial discrimination. In the Caribbean, the site of the longest and deepest social experiment in building societies based on a complex of racial shades, the University of the West Indies can be one such centre to study ethnic relations.

Crucially, to give tangible and practical meaning both to this High Level Meeting which focuses on the victims of racial discrimination and to a year designated as the International Year of People of African Descent, we renew our call for meaningful and innovative reparations globally for people of African descent as past and continuing victims of racial discrimination.

Included in these reparations should be funding targeted at national economic development as well as resources intended to support social programmes designed to counter the attacks on the self-worth of people of African descent. Such programmes are being implemented in Barbadian schools and communities, and they investigate, identify and counter those messages and images that negate the value of the knowledge and culture of people of African descent by building awareness of the fundamental contribution of African peoples to world civilisation.

Finally, if the full potential of all individuals and groups within our nation, and indeed all nations, is to be realised, and if the Human Rights of every citizen are to be protected, then continuous investigation, monitoring, and reporting of acts of racial discrimination must be a priority.

It is evident, however, that not all states possess the technical or financial resources for this type of surveillance which also serves as the basis for reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

It is critical therefore, that priority be given to providing technical and financial resources to states as well as regional and international bodies for the development of institutionalised systems of surveillance. Barbados is proposing a model for one such system of surveillance and will seek to collaborate with other nations for its full development and implementation.

The Government of Barbados joins with the voiceless around the world in the hope that this Meeting will re-energise and propel interest; mobilise resources; and strengthen the political will of global leaders to bring attention and resources to those government and civil society programmes that seek to realise the Durban Programme of Action.

I thank you.