

25 March 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,  
President of the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly on  
the Occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims  
of Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade**

*Statement delivered by H.E. Mr. Christopher Hackett, Permanent Representative of Barbados, Acting President of The General Assembly*

Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Dr Ali Abdussalam Treki, President of the General Assembly.

We are gathered here today for the third annual International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. This commemoration by the General Assembly signifies the international community's respect and honor for the millions of Africans, violently removed from the African continent and transferred to centuries of bondage in North and South America and in the islands of the Caribbean.

The Durban Conference against Racism firmly established the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as the greatest scourge of modern life and a grotesque crime against humanity. Today is an occasion not only to enhance awareness about the past, but also to commit that never again should human beings display such inhumanity towards other human beings. The United Nations Organization must indeed continue to deploy all efforts in order to bridge the knowledge gap. Major historical events and facts that have now been ascertained cannot continue to be ignored. Ignorance and concealment are obstacle to peace and dialogue. The United Nations, including UNESCO, must be vocal and visible on this issue and help break the silence that still surrounds the many tragic aspects of slavery and slave trade.

I commend the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Group for taking the lead on this annual commemoration. All of us fully embrace this initiative, and with one voice pay homage to the victims, say "No" to this horrific act of oppression, and call attention to the lingering traces of prejudice, which, sadly, continue as a legacy of the enslavement of Africans.

I also commend the complementary initiative led by the CARICOM States to establish a Permanent Memorial at the United Nations to the memory of all the victims of Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic

Slave Trade, and I call on all Member States and the international community to provide all out support for this Memorial.

This year's commemoration, with its theme, "Expressing our Freedom Through Culture", underscores one of the many approaches of the resistance movement which the enslaved Africans employed to eventually bring an end to this heinous crime. Throughout the Americas, the enslaved Africans, despite their horrendous conditions, were able to preserve the aspects of their culture which continue to this day as manifested in music, song, dance, language, cuisine, and sports.

We welcome the special significance attached to this year's commemoration which is dedicated to Haiti, as the first successful result of the resistance of the enslaved, which overthrew the forces of oppression and cast aside the shackles of slavery bringing an end to the rule of the masters. We must pay special tribute to the leaders of the Haitian revolution, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines and others, who by their revolutionary action, ushered in the demise of slavery in the Caribbean, South America, and in the United States, and forced the breaking of the silence on this horror.

The slave trade is among the worst violations of human rights in history. Due to its duration, its scale and the legitimization that was accorded to it, the transatlantic slave trade is unique, maybe the first example of globalization. We should never forget that this was the biggest deportation in history. Slave Trade and slavery have affected all continents and have caused the great upheavals that have impacted the modern societies. It is unfortunate and totally unacceptable that in this age we are still struggling to confront slavery and slave trade and its various manifestations, such as human trafficking.

The slogan "Never Again" therefore needs to be transformed into action and visible results. That will be the best homage to the victims of slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Thank you.