

23 March 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery
and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

Your Excellency Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are here to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Trans-atlantic Slave Trade.

We are here to acknowledge the long suffering of innocent victims and the courage of heroes, resisters and survivors of slavery and the slave trade.

We are here to honour millions of Africans forcibly removed from their homes and cast into in-humane conditions.

We are here to celebrate the courage of count-less men and women who have rebelled against this cruel and brutal practice, in order to re-gain freedom, dignity and independence.

The terrible impacts of slavery and the slave trade are still felt to this day.

They have devastated continents and countries.

They have led to profound social and economic inequalities, and have given rise to hatred, racism and prejudice.

We are here today not only to raise awareness about the consequences of the slave trade and slavery, but most importantly to ensure that such systematic abuse of human rights is never repeated again.

Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that “no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms”.

Yet, over two hundred years since the abolition of slavery, we are again faced with this scourge.

Contemporary forms of slavery and slave-like practices have emerged in the forms of racism, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, child labour, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

Poverty, illiteracy and economic, social and gender inequality are all factors that worsen modern forms of slavery.

Combating slavery means taking an all-encompassing approach through laws, mechanisms, cooperation, outreach programmes, and education.

Instruments that are already in place, including the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons”, as well as the “UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery”, should be fully utilized to bring about necessary change in attitudes and customs, to punish the offenders, and to support innocent victims in re-gaining their lives and dignity.

The United Nations and all its members have an obligation to work tirelessly to eradicate modern forms of slavery.

It is a fight that goes beyond the role of Governments.

Everyone, including private sector, civil society and individuals have an important part to play.

That is why I intend to convene an interactive dialogue : “Fighting human trafficking: Partnership and innovation to end violence against women and girls” on April 3rd here in New York.

The event is organized in cooperation with the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Rising to the challenges before us will require solidarity, commitment, engagement and partnership from all segments of our society.

We have to work closely to educate future generations that slavery in any form is unacceptable.

Commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade provides us with the opportunity to keep this issue visible.

We can also raise awareness of dangers associated with racism and prejudice, and ensure that one of the worst violations of human rights in the history of humanity is never forgotten.

In closing, I would like to commend the efforts of the Steering Committee of the Caribbean Community and the African Group, as well as the Department of Public Information, for organizing this special commemorative session to pay homage to the heroes, resisters and survivors.

Let us learn from the horrors and sacrifices of the past, and ensure through concrete actions and results that slavery in all its forms is forever eliminated.

I also like to encourage Member States to contribute to the funds (The UN Slavery Memorial Fund) It is very important.

Thank you.