

18 November 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Agenda Item: 66 (b) Comprehensive Implementation of and  
Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is with a sense of pride and satisfaction that I preside over the General Assembly at this historic moment when the United Nations is about to embark on the observance of an International Decade for People of African Descent.

When one thinks of the courage and fortitude of people of African descent emerging from the devastating reality that was slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, one cannot but be humbled to know how far they have come. However, while recognizing the progress made, we need to go much further.

Racism and structural and institutional discrimination against people of African descent continues to manifest in situations that limit access to quality education, employment, housing and healthcare. Worldwide, people of African descent are frequently among the most marginalised members of society. They often inhabit the poorest districts with the most precarious and neglected infrastructure. They are vulnerable to crime and violence. In attempts to seek legal redress, they too often face discrimination in access to justice.

In 2001, we adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The DDPA confirmed what we all know to be true, that people of African descent still suffer as victims from the consequences of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism. By adopting as the theme of the International Decade: “recognition, justice and development”, the international community is providing an opportunity to have a global conversation about the burdens and accomplishments of people of African descent.

Evidence of the contributions of people of African descent to the development of our societies is abundant and irrefutable. The International Decade is designed to celebrate these contributions. In so doing, the International Decade can help to break down the walls of stereotype and stigma that often surround people of African descent.

It is equally important for the International Decade to raise awareness and contribute to the efforts of Member States and the international community toward ensuring the promotion, respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of people of African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

Today, we have a unique opportunity to make this International Decade one of action and promise. By adopting the draft resolution and programme of activities before us, the General Assembly will take a bold step toward that objective.

African descendants around the world are watching and counting on us.

I thank you.