

21 November 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
on the General Assembly agenda item 116: Follow-up to the
commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of
the transatlantic slave trade**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Eight years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/19 titled “Commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade”, we are now just a few months away from the unveiling of a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

This memorial, “The Ark of Return” will occupy a prominent place at the United Nations and will be an important vehicle to educate and inform current and future generations of the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The memorial will also be a key component of the educational outreach envisaged by resolution 61/19 and subsequent resolutions adopted annually on the subject.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Permanent Memorial Committee for the efforts expended thus far toward the construction of the Memorial. As we enter the next phase in the goal of erecting the Memorial, I encourage those Member States, individuals and other partners, who have not yet done so, to consider contributing to the Trust Fund to ensure that this project comes to fruition.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With the resolution before us today, the General Assembly takes note of the many initiatives undertaken by Member States to reaffirm their commitment to confronting the legacy of slavery and restoring the dignity of its victims.

The report of the Secretary-General highlights many of the educational outreach and awareness-raising activities carried out by Member States; United Nations entities, in particular the Department of Public Information; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; various civil society organizations; and other partners.

I congratulate UNESCO on the twentieth anniversary of the Slave Route Project, which over the years has been a significant source for research, pedagogy and public awareness on slavery and the slave trade.

These campaigns provide an opportunity to reflect upon the history and legacy of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism. They also contribute to a global conversation that can help break down barriers raised by discrimination, racism and intolerance.

The International Day of Remembrance is an important part of these outreach efforts. Given that one of the priorities of my Presidency is gender equality and women's empowerment, I am pleased to note that next year's commemoration will focus on women and slavery. This theme will allow an exploration of the role of women in preserving cultural heritage.

Distinguished delegates,

The legacy of slavery and the slave trade is a stark reminder of the dangers of racism and prejudice, as well as a warning against the devastating effects of modern forms of slavery. By promoting awareness and tolerance through education and outreach, we must reflect on the history, lessons and consequences of this tragic chapter.

As the General Assembly adopts this resolution today, we reaffirm the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With this resolution, we renew our commitment to ensuring that everybody has the right to a life of dignity, free from exploitation and abuse.

Thank you.