**Opening Statement by Anastasia Crickley
Chairperson Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**
Friends, from CERD's work it's clear that the legacies of slavery and colonialism are still alive and awful in the lives of far too many people of African descent globally. I'm very glad, as chairperson of the Committee, to be able be here to express again CERD's support for the Decade overall as well as for this second Regional Meeting. I'm personally glad also to stand in solidarity with your struggles as an older white woman but one who, coming as I do from Ireland, has some understanding of the legacies of colonialism and their consequences.

The elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent falls right within the core of the International Covenant for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Committee's work. The term African descent may not have been in extensive use then, but the development of the Convention in the 1960s was significantly influenced by the horrors of apartheid in South Africa and the struggles for civil rights in the USA.

Since then progress has undoubtedly been made but today's toxic global discourse threatens this. Vigilance and courage are required from all whatever your remit, in naming racial discrimination for what it is wherever you see it, whoever is perpetuating it and whichever group is the target. Also the economic and social initiatives necessary for real and sustainable progress were not always put in place, or have been reversed or disregarded with widening implications for structural differentials and worsening racism.

In proclaiming this Decade the international community recognised that the human rights of people of African descent needed to be promoted and protected and the particular forms of racism you experience named and addressed. I'm proud that CERD has played an active role from the outset. In 2011, the International Year of People of African Descent, the Committee, following discussions with all stakeholders, adopted a General Recommendation on People of African Descent. This is now used in all the Concluding Observations to states under review as a means of calling on states to launch the Decade and engage with the issues.

In addition CERD makes particular recommendations to countries - most recently Oman, Portugal and Canada and calls on all states to collect data which will identify communities and help create conditions to address the needs and promote the rights, of people of African descent. CERD participated in the first Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015 and we have offered our support to this gathering through the contributions which will be made by Gay McDougall, Pastor Murillo Martinez, and Verene Shepherd over the next two days.

In CERD we know, as the High Commissioner has reminded us earlier, that when dealing with racism one size does not fit all. The complexities of the intersectional discrimination experienced by women of African descent and other women being subjected to racism, need to be addressed directly and indeed they are in our ongoing work. We are conscious of other ways that the legacies of slavery live on in today's world, including in the white suprecemist marches of the USA this summer which were not unequivocally condemned, then or since, by the highest office holder in the land.

I'm sorry I can't stay for your discussions, but as you may know CERD is currently meeting in our 94th session down the hill in Palais Wilson, and I need to go to re-join the Committee but I look forward to hearing about your deliberations from the colleagues we have been able to facilitate to be with you. However I want to assure you of CERD's continued committment to supporting the work and objectives of the Decade and of the Working Group. For us you are a key part of the struggle towards the elimination of racial discrimination 'on purpose' or 'in effect' as the definition in article 1 of the ICERD so crucially articulates it.

I wish you well and thank you for your attention.