



## **Extending the Decade of People of African Descent: Continuing the Journey Towards Recognition, Justice, and Development in Asia and the Pacific Region**

*Organized in the framework of the Regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific region on the International Decade for People of African Descent by United Nations former Fellows for People of African Descent*

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### **Background**

In 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 68/237 and proclaimed 2015 to 2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Asia and the Pacific region is the fifth region to organize a regional meeting to address the three themes of the Decade—Recognition, Justice and Development—as part of the framework to recognize the contribution of people of African descent to every society, and develop concrete measures to stop discrimination and promote their full inclusion.

In addition to the goals of the International Decade for People of African descent (General Assembly resolution 69/16), the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), and other relevant international and regional human rights instruments have provisions to address the issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against People of African descent.

As part of the awareness raising campaign for the International Decade for People of African descent (A/RES/69/16), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is organizing two-day regional meeting for the Asia and the Pacific region on 15-16 January 2024 in hybrid format. During the two-day regional meeting, the United Nations former Fellows in the Asia and the Pacific region for People of African descent are organizing a special side event with focus on advocating for the extension of the Decade for People of African Descent, highlighting its significance in addressing crucial matters related to the three themes: Recognition, Justice, and Development.

The People of African descent make up a significant part of people living in the Asia and the Pacific region. They have contributed significantly to the development and enrichment of the

region while engaging with the Africa continent. The people and societies of the Asia and the Pacific region also share common heritage of colonial and post-colonial experiences with Africans and people of African descent.

The Decade has been a timely and unique opportunity to underline the vital contribution made by People of African descent and to propose concrete measures that promote recognition, justice and development for people of African descent.

### **Special Side Event by former Fellows of the Asia Pacific Region**

Between 2013 and 2023, there have been nine people of African descent who have worked as United Nations former fellows for People of African descent, and made significant contributions towards advancing the goals of the International Decade. Their experiences and those of their communities show that people of African descent and Africans in the region have continued to be victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, mirroring the experience faced by People of African descent in other regions.

United Nations former Fellows for People of African descent living in the Asia and the Pacific region are organizing a special event during the two-day events at the Asia and the Pacific regional meeting in Geneva on January 15-16, 2024. The event is dedicated to highlighting the voices of people of African descent in the region and creating awareness of the importance of extending the International Decade for People of African descent as the decade is ending by the end of 2024 and there still a lot to be done to achieve the Decade's three key themes: recognition, justice, and development. In addition, former Fellows will make a joint statement and propose recommendations.

### **Objectives**

1. Raise awareness about the programme of activities of the International Decade for People of African descent in the Asia and the Pacific region;
2. Highlights the progress made on recognition, justice and development in the Asia and the Pacific region;
3. Strengthen national, regional and international cooperation and facilitate the exchange of good practices;
4. Promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the historical and contemporary contributions of people of African descent in the Asia and the Pacific region;
5. Make recommendations on the importance of extending the Decade.

### **Theme of the Special Event**

Extending the Decade of People of African Descent: Continuing the Journey Towards Recognition, Justice and Development in the Asia and the Pacific Region.

### **Target Audience**

The meeting will gather Member States, United Nations specialized agencies and bodies, regional organizations, national human rights institutions, equality bodies, civil society representatives, particularly people of African descent, experts and academics from the Asia Pacific region.

## Anticipated Outcomes

- A strengthened national, regional and international action and cooperation concerning the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- An improved awareness and recognition of Africans and People of African Descent in the Asia Pacific region;
- A recommendation to extend the Decade to address salient issues and to offset the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the decade.
- More awareness on the progress made on recognition, justice and development in the Asian Pacific region;
- The identification of existing initiatives and opportunities for promoting equality, non-discrimination, inclusion, tolerance and social harmony in Asia and the Pacific region;
- A greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- Strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

## Schedule of Activities

### United Nations Fellows Special Event

Date	Activity	Description	Venue/Time
16 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Special side event	This program will offer former Fellows the opportunity to discuss the status of People of African Descent in the Asia-Pacific Region and make recommendations on the importance of extending the Decade on People of African Descent.	Hybrid (Geneva & Online) 12:30-13:30

## Format

The event will comprise the following specific activities: General Discussions and Presentations by former Fellows as speakers.

## Program of event

SN	Activity	Time
1.	Video Presentation	5mins
2.	Presentation	20mins
3.	General Discussion	30mins
4.	Joint Statement	5mins

## List of Speakers

1. Dr. Samantha Sibanda
2. Mr. Sylvarius Alando Chia
3. Dr. Justina Kehinde Obaoye
4. Mr. Christian Lambang Fonye
5. Ms. Phoebe Mwanza
6. Mr. Philip Binondo

## Lists of former Fellows in the Asia and the Pacific Region

Name of Fellow	Year of Fellowship	Country of Residence
Phoebe Mwanza	2013	Australia
Philip Binondo	2018	Philippines
Samantha Sibanda	2018	China
Justina Kehinde Obaoye	2020	China
Christian Lambang Fonye	2020	Australia
Muhammad Dan Suleiman	2020	Australia
Elizabeth Lang	2020	Australia
Sylvarius Alando Chia	2022	Japan
Grace Williams	2023	Australia

## Speakers Biography



Dr. Samantha Sibanda is a distinguished leader, educator, entrepreneur, radio personality, and philanthropist. With a fervent dedication to growth, empowerment, and human development, she has earned recognition for her impactful work in the education and NGO sectors. Dr. Sibanda's commitment to addressing social issues and advocating for the rights of Africans in China and beyond has earned her accolades, including being named one of the 100 Most Influential People of African Descent under 40 by MIPAD in 2018 and in the same year she was also accepted into the UN OHCHR Fellowship of People of African Descent. As the Founder of Appreciate Africa Network, she champions the promotion and preservation of African sociocultural and economic values on a global scale, with a particular focus on their impact in China.



**Name:** Sylvarius Alando CHIA

**Country of Residence:** Japan/Australia

**Current Occupation(s):** Senior Community Engagement Officer, Dept. of Education Victoria- Australia (Researcher, cultural consultant). Transnational Engagement Officer, The Association of Cameroonians in Japan.

**Civil society engagement:** He has lived in the Asia Pacific region for over 15 year working on, and researching African immigrants' emigration, human rights challenges, identity negotiation, and multiculturalism in Thailand, Japan, and Australia. He is the transnational engagement officer of the Association of Cameroonians in Japan, African EAL Teachers Association of Thailand, and Cameroon-Australian Friendship Association, building structural and relational social capital, advocating for the recognition of the People of African Descent's presence, challenges, and contribution within these countries.



Dr. Justina Obaoye-Ajala, a seasoned legal professional, champions human rights and social justice globally. A beacon of fair leadership, she ardently advocates for women's empowerment.

She provides pro-bono legal services to People of African descent, and she bridges gaps between prison inmates and their families, serving as a vital intermediary. Additionally, as a legal English translator in China, she aids immigrants in navigating intricate policies through

her Law firm, Kentyna Solicitors. Her dedication to justice and empowerment defines her impactful presence in legal circles, recognized worldwide for her tireless service.

Her unwavering dedication has earned her acclaim from local and international bodies, including her recognition as one of the Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD) and a 2020 United Nations Fellow for People of African descent. She spearheads various diaspora networks and holds ambassadorial roles, leaving an indelible mark in her diverse engagements.



Christian Lambang Fonye is a member of Amnesty International Australia (AIA). He is also a founding member of the Global Black Collective. He previously served as the President for the Activism Leadership Committee of AIA in the Australian Capital Territory/Southern New south-Wales region. He is currently the refugee lead in the region. Christian previously worked as a Settlement officer with the Migrant and refugee Settlement services (MARSS) Australia and later joined the Community service directorate as a Housing Manager. He has extensive experience working with the civil society in Cameroon and Australia. He served as the monitoring and Evaluation officer of the European Union Civil society strengthening program in Cameroon and worked as a Protection officer with Cameroon's National Human Rights Commission. He also worked as a Program Coordinator for Peace and International Relations in the Pan African institute for development west Africa. He is a 2017 YALI fellow and is committed to promoting a rights-based approach to development. He is a 2020 United Nations fellow for People of African descent and recently served as a Senior fellow for minorities and indigenous peoples with the Pacific Regional Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights



Phoebe Mwanza has been a lawyer since 2007 with a specific focus on anti-discrimination and human rights law. She is a human rights, anti-discrimination and diversity and inclusion expert.

Phoebe is currently the Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Specialist at Amnesty International Australia.

Phoebe has worked with organizations such as the Attorney General's Department, Ernst and Young and the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Phoebe was appointed as a member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Regional Advisory Council between 2019 and 2021. She is also currently appointed on the Human Rights Advisory Panel for the QLD Parliament since 2020.



Phillip Binondo is a human rights advocate with over a decade of experience in the intersections of education, sustainable development and human rights. He is a former UN OHCHR fellow for people of African descent and a founding member of the African Diaspora Insight and the African/American Coaches and Athletes of the Philippines (AFCAAP). He also taught International Relations and Human Rights at De La Salle University-Manila. Currently, he is the Community Relations and Corporate Communications Manager at JE Hydro & Bio-energy Corp.

For more information please contact-

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