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May 4, 2023

32nd Session of the Working Group of
Experts on People of African Descent
High- Level Segment
Memoirs of Durban
Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland
32nd Session of the

To the Members of the Working Group and Attendees of the Session:

First, I want to thank the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent for the invitation to participate in this special event. I accepted the invitation really on behalf of the two NGO's which I have been a member of for over the past three decades, the December 12th Movement International Secretariat and the International Association Against Torture. Whatever contributions I have made in helping to secure the adoption of and advancing the DDPA are due to the leadership, guidance and support they have provided. So I will be using "I" and "We" interchangeably during these few minutes.

I come from a background of both academia and street activism. The fight to achieve a victory in the United Nations is much different than doing so in the streets. When we first came to the U.N. in 1989, the late consummate diplomat, Cuba's Miguel Alfonso Martinez, taught us that this is a different forum of struggle, but a struggle nevertheless. Victory may depend not on the size or location of a demonstration but on the placement of a semi-colon. The UN is a body to influence world public opinion.

We came to the UN to implement the mandate set by Malcolm X who said that the struggle of Black people in the U.S. must move outside US political and geographical boundaries and establish a presence in the international arena. We must move beyond civil rights and place our situation on the agenda of human rights. So before the emergence of the internet, google and AI, when coming to the then Commission on Human Rights sessions, we engaged in weeks of old school research - reading, studying, cutting out articles, writing interventions and pamphlets - to bring the truth of the human rights violations faced by our people in the U.S.

From then until now we have received much support from the developing world and much interference and sabotage from the WEO Group.

The greatest victory we have attained so far is the DDPA. It was the result of years of organizing, first, for the UN to reconvene a World Conference Against Racism, which it had not done since 1980 in the Apartheid era of Rhodesia and South Africa. Then it was organizing People of African Descent from across the Diaspora to place 3 issues at the top of their agenda for Durban: 1) a declaration that the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Slavery and Colonialism were Crimes Against Humanity; 2) Reparations are due the descendants of the victims of these crimes; and 3) Recognition of the Economic Basis of Slavery.

In order to accomplish this, we founded the Afro-Descendant Coalition at the second international PrepCom in Geneva in 2001. In addition, we and the National Black United Front organized a delegation of 400 Black people, mainly from the U.S., the “Durban 400,” to come and lobby at the WCAR. That work is chronicled in the historic documentary “The Durban 400” produced by Iman Drammeh and Al Santana which can be seen on YouTube.

The lobbying work of these NGOs, the uncompromising leadership of the African Group, the strong stance taken by members of Caribbean countries and the G-77 produced the DDPA, which the WEOG began to disavow the day after Durban ended.

Since September 8, 2001, it has been a constant struggle to utilize the instruments which the DDPA provides. The most consistent of these has been the WGEPAD which we have worked with from its inception. It has been the principal mechanism which has upheld the banner of the DDPA, particularly on the issue of reparations, when parts of the Secretariat have seemingly bowed to the pressure of the WEO Group to disappear the document. It was through the WGEPAD that the theme of “Recognition, Justice and Development” was set as the theme for the International Year and the International Decade for People of African Descent. We particularly appreciated the 2016 Report of the WGEPAD on its country visit to the U.S. which recognized the need for the U.S. to address our demand for reparations. Yesterday, we helped host the New York City section of EMLER’s current investigation into US law enforcement abuses of People of African Descent. Their findings and recommendations will probably echo those so clearly set out in the Working Group’s 2016 report which the U.S. has done nothing to implement.

The struggle to maintain the supremacy of the DDPA continues to this day. Its latest manifestation is in the WEO Group’s enthusiastic, almost evangelistic, support for the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent as a replacement for and/or superior to the DDPA. These two entities can and should work in collaboration with and complementary to each other. They are not antagonistic to each other but can become so if manipulated by those whose interests lie in denying the DDPA and the Demand for Reparations. The attempt to paint the WGEPAD as superfluous now that the PFPAD has begun is a reflection of that manipulation.

Some twenty-two years later, our commitment to Reparations, the DDPA and the WGEPAD remain unwavering. I end with the slogan we developed for Durban.

**THEY STOLE US! THEY SOLD US! THEY OWE US!
REPARATIONS NOW!**

THANK YOU.

Roger Wareham