Statement

By

H.E. Anthony Liverpool

of the Permanent Mission of

Antigua and Barbuda

on agenda item 67(b): Combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

On behalf of

CARICOM

November 4, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to address the Committee on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on Agenda Item 67(b): Combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. CARICOM wishes to thank the Secretariat and the Special Rapporteur for the presentation of the respective reports which serve to guide our discussion.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM aligned itself with the statement made by Fiji on behalf of G77 and China.

As long as people are willing to change and are given the opportunity, we can see tremendous advancement towards "The World We Want" - a world without racism or racial discrimination – a world where everyone is given equal access to education, health and opportunity. Unfortunately, we are not yet there.

The information in the respective reports of the Secretary-General continues to show that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance continue to prevail, to varying degrees, across our planet. We have yet to achieve full equality of access and opportunity in the social, political, and cultural sectors as well as in the areas of education, labor, and public health, and recent studies have shown that inequality, especially in some developed countries, is disturbingly on the increase. In this regard, CARICOM concurs with the statement of the Special Rapporteur, and reaffirmed in the Durban Declaration, that poverty and racism in some countries are inextricably linked. This factor should therefore be fully taken into account in devising ways and means of addressing inequality, including the uneven distribution of wealth.

CARICOM joins the Special Rapporteur in welcoming the efforts and initiatives undertaken by various States to prohibit discrimination and segregation, and to engender full enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for all. We also take note of his observation that certain groups and individuals, including people of African descent, indigenous people, migrants,
minorities, and others, are still confronted with poverty and discrimination, especially in the enjoyment of their basic human rights, as well as their economic and social rights.

Accordingly, CARICOM urges Member States which have not yet done so, to put in place enforceable legal mechanisms that would stop exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, lineage or national or ethnic origin. States should consider reviewing laws or norms which nullify or diminish the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres, and put in place mechanisms where they do not already exist that would stop the marginalization of racial and ethnic groups.

These legal mechanisms should ensure protection as well as guarantee enjoyment of human rights, including the right to education, to adequate housing, the highest attainable standard of health to food and to safe water. Taking this action not only will end the multigenerational nature of poverty through inheritance, but will also help national and regional development.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM welcomes the report of the Secretary General A/67/879 on “How to make the International Decade for People of African Descent effective,” and concurs that the main objective of the Decade should be to promote respect, protection and fulfillment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for people of African descent, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

CARICOM also agrees that an international decade would maintain the momentum that has been gathering speed since the World Conference against Racism of 2001, the Durban Review Conference held in 2009, the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in 2011 and the International Year for People of African Descent in 2011.

CARICOM takes note of the practical steps recommended to make an International Decade for People of African Descent effective, as well as the recognition that the "unique nature of the discrimination faced by people of African descent" (is) particularly related to the legacy of history." We support
progressive initiatives to tackle the scourge of racism in all of its forms and manifestations consistent with the prospective International Decade.

In this connection, CARICOM is pleased to be collaborating with the African Group to erect a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade at the United Nations. We are pleased that the design competition for the memorial has been concluded with the selection of the “Ark of Return”. This development advances significantly the process to complete this historic project devoted to the extraordinary survival of the ancestors who were the victims of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. We thank donor countries, organizations and individuals who have contributed, and continue to contribute, to this effort. We look forward to the sustained and increased support of all stakeholders in order to bring the project to a satisfactory and expeditious conclusion.

Mr. Chairman,

The history of the Caribbean region as a whole reflects the very legacy of the injustices suffered by Africans and their descendants who were victimized due to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the resultant forced labour and related inhumane practices which were rightfully declared as crimes against humanity during the Durban process. CARICOM has concluded that these events represent a fundamental cause for reparation for the centuries of exploitation and hardship thrust upon the people of our region, including the indigenous peoples and those of Africa descent.

In this connection, the CARICOM Heads of Government at their 34th Regular Meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago last July agreed to support the establishment of a regional Reparations Commission to begin laying the ground work for a process of engagement with the former slave holding countries, towards reconciliation and reparation for Native Genocide and Slavery in order to provide remedy for the injustices suffered over 400 years of the African slave trade. As a direct follow-up, the First Caribbean Regional Conference on Reparations was held last September in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, CARICOM recognizes that there is still a long way to go before the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms are enjoyed by all peoples. We are therefore fully committed to working together at national, regional and international levels to foster inclusive societies in which all peoples are able to enjoy all of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and further remain committed to implementing relevant international instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and all other relevant instruments which we endorse or to which we are States Parties.

Thank you for your attention.