Mr President,

I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

The Group notes that the theme for the 2015 International Day of Remembrance is "Women and Slavery". Women in slavery had to face issues of great complexity. They had to deal with dual oppression, i.e. because of their race and also gender. Women had to bear the tortures of “slave breeding”, sexual exploitation, harassment and working in “less than ideal” conditions. Despite their suffering, they contributed enormously to the societies they served, which has resulted in the prosperity and growth of modern societies.

Mr President

The debate today provides us a unique opportunity to further talk about the horrendous crime against humanity and assist us in our fight against all forms of discrimination and contemporary forms and manifestations of slavery. Political will, strong commitment and new and sustainable
partnerships are essential to address past and present injustices, in order to develop a new equitable and just world.

The concept of slavery has a very long history; in actual fact, the tragedy of slavery began some six (6) centuries ago, and directly links with the practices of colonialism and imperialism. The width and breath of the entire continent of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia were devastated by this barbaric practice, which led to the subjugation of the entire continents and its peoples.

Slavery, the slave trade and in particular, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade brought about untold miseries to and the cascading effects of these abhorrent legacies are still felt even in our present period.

Mr President

At the core of this tragic history of slavery and transatlantic slave trade, has been the plundering of the entire continent of Africa and the stealing of her vital resources and artefacts. Slavery has undergone various transformations since its abolition in the 19th century and reappeared in the form of indentured labour and bonded labour. Slavery continues to manifest in contemporary forms, including trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, bonded labour and forced marriages. Eradicating the socio-economic causes of modern slavery, including, inter alia, poverty and underdevelopment, marginalisation, social exclusion, economic
disparities, instability and insecurity in the current era of globalization should be accorded high priority.

We welcome the historic unveiling of the Permanent Memorial “The Ark of Return”, as a remembrance and respect to the victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. We also welcome the United Nations’ observance to mark the eighth International Day of Remembrance of the victims of slavery and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in which more than 15 million slaves perished through the Middle passage, while being transported to North America and Europe. We believe that the memorial will serve as a significant symbol and reminder of what the United Nations represents: which is “the promotion and preservation of the dignity and worth of all human beings” - principles that are central to its Charter. We hope that it will further serve as a concrete reminder of the painful legacy of the slave trade.

Despite the progress made in our fight against all forms of discrimination, much more remains to be done in overcoming racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances which continue to bedevil the human race. We call upon the International Community to strengthen its political commitment and mobilise adequate resources, that will assist in the comprehensive implementation of the outcomes of the Durban process.

Mr President
New and emerging challenges include misuse of information communication technology (ICT) to invite hatred, violence and racism. Recent events within the sporting fraternity are a testimony to the resurgence of a particularly aggressive and at times violent form of racial discrimination.

In conclusion, the Group deplores continued denial that slavery, slave trade and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, remains the worst form of racism and racial discrimination in recorded history. There are vital lessons to be drawn from this grim picture. The international community must continue to encourage educational outreach programme to raise awareness on slavery, and its contemporary forms, and take precaution that the tragedy is not repeated by future generations. The Group believes that tolerance and respect for diversity should be the intrinsic value for humanity in the 21st century.

I thank you.