BRAZIL

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International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota
Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN

New York, March 25, 2015
Mr. President,

Brazil associates itself with the statements on behalf of the G77/China and GRULAC.

2015 marks the beginning of the Third International Decade for People of African Descent. In the Programme of Activities for this Decade, we have committed to promoting greater knowledge and recognition of and respect for the culture, history and heritage of people of African descent. The Permanent Memorial unveiled today is the first concrete initiative in this context and Brazil is honored to have contributed to the project at its early stages.

Mr. President,

Slavery, slave trade and the transatlantic slave trade - or the "African Holocaust" - victimized over 15 million people, much more than any other persecution of ethnic groups since the World War II. We have been able to eliminate the scourge of slavery. However, racial inequality and discrimination still remain.

More than three centuries of slavery and slave trade have seriously impinged on the population of African descent in Brazil, who account for over a hundred million people.
People of African descent still have limited access to education, health, housing, subsist on lower incomes and are more vulnerable to violence. In many cases, they are largely invisible, as if inequality was a matter of course.

Women and girls of African Descent experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability, and marginalization. Young Brazilians of African Descent are more vulnerable to violence and account for nearly 80 per cent of the victims of homicides.

In addressing racial discrimination and inequality in Brazil, we have made every effort to design programs and policies that had women as main beneficiaries.

To redress the situation of young Brazilians of African descent, the Government designed a program to reduce and prevent all forms of violence against them, as well as to promote their social inclusion and empowerment.

We have created a series of specific policies on the fight against poverty, on housing, on health and on employment. We have included the teaching of Afro-Brazilian History in the mandatory elementary and middle school curricula, in order to improve our children’s self esteem; we have broadened access to higher education and to employment through affirmative action in universities and in the public service.

Affirmative action combined with national policies for eradicating poverty have positively impacted the historically marginalized group of people of African descent in Brazil. Over the past 10 years, Brazil has reduced social
and racial inequalities. Brazilians of African descent represented 38% of the middle class in 2002. Today, they account for 75% of this new expanding segment.

Mr. President,

Combating racism is not an option; is a moral and ethical obligation. We are a multiethnic and multiracial nation. The value of the contribution brought in by Afrodescendants to the country is an answer to the invisibility of victims of racism and discrimination.

We, Brazilians, hold our heritage in high esteem and are proud of the diversity on which our nation and identity are built.

Racism and inequality are incompatible with democracy. The way through which our societies have made this binomial compatible erodes the concept and undermines the efforts to effectively build democracy. We must broaden and strengthen the protection spectrum enshrined in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action—never reduce it. There will be no effective democracy as long as all forms of discrimination, segregation and intolerance are not permanently banned.

Thank you, Mr. President.