

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA AT THE REPARATIONS AND RACIAL HEALING SUMMIT IN ACCRA, GHANA ON MONDAY 1ST AUGUST 2022 AT KEMPINSKI HOTEL.

Director of Diaspora Affairs at the Presidency, Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President and CEO of the African-America Institute, Africa Director of the MacArthur Foundation, Director of the Africa Transitional Justice Legacy Fund, Representative of Global Black, Representatives of the Global Circle, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Fellow Africans, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I thank the organizers, the Africa-America Institute, the African Union Commission, the MacArthur Foundation, The Africa Transitional Justice Legacy Fund, the office of Diaspora Affairs at the Presidency of Ghana for this initiative, bringing together under one roof, this distinguished audience from all spheres of life and from all over the world to participate in this summit with its rich agenda and to deliberate on its important theme.

I extend a hearty Akwaaba, a word of welcome to all of you who have come from beyond our shores to our vibrant city of Accra, capital of Ghana to join us on this critical occasion. You are most welcome amongst the people who pride themselves on their sense of hospitality. All of us at this gathering are agreed that never again should the black person allow him or herself to be subjected to the dehumanizing conditions of slavery.

The barbaric and inhumane Transatlantic Slave Trade in whatever form, should never be repeated. Never again, should the African peoples be described as, “indentured servants” or “the apprentices for life.” Ladies and gentlemen, it began with some twenty slaves from West Africa being forcibly sent to the Commonwealth of Virginia in what was to become the United States of America. It was the first of thirty-six thousand voyages to and from the continent, which resulted in twenty million Africans from Central and West Africa being sold into slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean. We are also told that ten percent of this number, that is two million Africans, lost their lives enroute to their destination with the Atlantic Ocean serving as their final resting place.

As if this was not enough, the continent had to endure centuries of being colonized by the same people who undertook the slave trade. The identity and personality of Africans were brutally assaulted, and the imprints of colonialism and imperialism woven deeply into the fabric of our lives. For many of the millions of the descendants of these unwilling travellers to the Americas, Africa remains a continent of deep emotions and unresolved questions.

But what we do know is that the African peoples built and contributed to the successes of the Americas. And even though they did not willingly make the journeys in the two hundred years of the slave trade, once there, they were and have been an integral part



of the success in their new homes, even though they have not benefited nearly as much as they should have from their tour. Ghana recognizes her unique position as the location for seventy-five per cent of the slave dungeons built on the West Coast of Africa, through which the slaves were transported. Not only do we have a responsibility to extend the hand of welcome back home to Africans in the diaspora, just as we did in 2019 during the Year of Return, we believe that calls for reparations to Africa are just. The effects of the slave trade have been devastating to the continent and to the African diaspora. The entire period of slavery meant that our progress economically, culturally and psychologically was stifled.

There are legions of stories a of families who were torn apart. Fathers who went up to fish or farm, never returned. Boys who went out to play and were taken, never came back. Daughters who went to fetch water, never saw their parents again. You cannot quantify the effects of such tragedies, but they need to be recognized. Africa and her peoples lost out tremendously in that period, and its ripple effects are still being felt right to this very day.

Ladies and gentlemen, reparations for Africa and the African diaspora are long overdue. Predictably, the question of reparations becomes a debate only when it comes to Africa and Africans. When the British ended slavery, all the owners of enslaved Africans received reparation to the tune of twenty million pounds sterling, the equivalent today of twenty billion pounds sterling. But enslaved Africans themselves, did not receive a penny.

Likewise, in the United States, owners of slaves received three hundred dollars for every slave they owned. The slaves themselves, received nothing. Take the case of Haiti, which had to pay reparations amounting to twenty-one billion United States dollars to French slave owners in 1825 for the victory of the great Haitian revolution. The first in the Americas and the Caribbean, which freed the slaves. It was a payment made under duress, that impoverished Haiti throughout the 19th century, till today. Native Americans have received and continue to receive reparations. Japanese American families who were incarcerated in internment camps in America during World War Two, received reparations. Jewish people, six million of whom who perished in the concentration camps in Hitlerite Germany received reparations, including homeland grants and support. So, it is time for Africa, twenty million of whose sons and daughters have their freedoms curtailed, and sold into slavery, also to receive reparations. No amount of money can restore the damage caused by the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its consequences, which have spanned many centuries. But nevertheless, it is now time to revive and intensify the discussions about reparations for Africa. Indeed, the time in this respect is long overdue. I would ask respectfully, we should not only concern ourselves with this summit with the modalities for the payment of reparations, but rather work to establish unequivocally, first, the justice in the call for reparations. We can then work out the modalities.



And even before these discussions on reparations conclude, the entire continent of Africa deserves a formal apology from the European nations involved in the slave trade for the crimes in damage it has called to the populations, psyche, image and character of the African the world over. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has taken the lead in the reparations debate, and I would urge the African union to engage with our kith and kin from the diaspora and form a united front to advance the cause for reparations. The discourse of reparations cannot succeed without emphasis on racial healing. We need to heal from the wrongs of the past, in order to capitalize on the opportunities that await us in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe the time has come to engage Africans in the diaspora and all persons of African descent, more positively in areas of trade and investment corporation, in skills and knowledge development. We must work together to change the African narrative, which is being characterized largely by concentration on disease, hunger, poverty, and illegal mass migration. Let us all remember that the destiny of all black people, no matter where they are in the world is bound up with Africa.

We should never forget the famous admonition of the celebrated Jamaican reggae star, Peter Tosh, when he said: “don’t care where you come from, as long as you are a black man, you are an African”.

We must help make Africa the place for investment progress and prosperity and not from where our youths are fleeing in hope of accessing the mirage of a better life in Europe or the Americas. We must do all we can to derive maximum dividends from our relations with the diaspora in mutually beneficial cooperation and as partners for shared growth and development. That is why I am excited about the holding of this summit. Largely because of the renewed enthusiasm around building Africa together. So, let us imbibe in ourselves a deep consciousness and understanding of the goals and history of the African people.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a great blow for human freedom and progress. When the African peoples in the wake of Ghana’s shining example, liberated themselves from the colonial and imperialist yoke, and the racist ideology of apartheid and emerged as free independent peoples to construct new nations of hope and advancement.

The first half of the 21st century should consolidate this development and see the growth of modern, prosperous technologically advanced nations within a United Africa, which would make the reality of the dream of the 21st century as the African century and bring dignity and respect to black people all over the world.

Once again, Akwaaba! And I wish you a successful conference, whose immediate outcome will be the Accra Declaration for Reparations and Racial Healing.

May God bless Mother Africa, black people everywhere, and us all. And may God bless our Homeland Ghana and make her great and strong. I thank you for your attention.

