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## On eve of Year for People of African Descent, Ban calls for final end to racism



10 December 2010 – As the United Nations system gears up to celebrate 2011 as the *International Year for People of African Descent*, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon delivered an impassioned plea today to the world community to eradicate racism once and for all.

“The international community cannot accept that whole communities are marginalized because of the colour of their skin,” he [told](#) an event at UN Headquarters in New York to launch the Year. “People of African descent are among those most affected by racism. Too often, they face denial of basic rights such as access to quality health services and education. Such fundamental wrongs have a long and terrible history.

“The international community has affirmed that the transatlantic slave trade was an appalling tragedy not only because of its barbarism but also because of its magnitude, organized nature and negation of the essential humanity of the victims.

“Even today, Africans and people of African descent continue to suffer the consequences of these acts,” he added, calling for their full integration into social, economic and political life and at all levels of decision-making.

The General Assembly proclaimed the Year in December 2009 in a resolution citing the need to strengthen national actions and regional and international cooperation to ensure that people of African descent fully enjoy economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights, to advance their

integration into all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society, and to promote a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture.

“As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms, ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,’” Mr. Ban said. “If we are to make those words real, then we must eradicate racism once and for all. The success of the International Year requires concerted efforts across the United Nations system and at the regional and national levels, with the widest possible engagement and participation.”

Also addressing the event was the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonovic, who said the International Year offers a unique opportunity to redouble efforts to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that affect Afro-descendants in all parts of the world.

“The International Year must become a milestone in the ongoing campaign to advance the rights of people of African descent and it deserves to be accompanied by activities that fire the imagination, enhance our understanding of the situation of people of African descent and are a catalyst for real and positive change in the daily lives of the millions of Afro-descendants around the world,” he told the gathering.

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