



African Diaspora Council of Switzerland

Project	INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN SWITZERLAND
Key points:	Promote dialogue and the implementation of a program of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development for People of African Descent in Switzerland
Organization:	African Diaspora Council of Switzerland and African Foundation for Migration and Development
Project length:	2017-2024 in four sections

1. HISTORICAL ASPECT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are around 200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent living in the Americas. Many millions more live in Europe and other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. Whether as descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, they often times constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups. The promotion and protection of human rights of people of African descent (PAD) has been a priority concern for the United Nations.

In 2001, the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, which had recognized the slave trade and slavery as “crimes against humanity” and people of African descent as victims who continue to be victims of its consequences. The Conference adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action proposing concrete measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Ten years later, in 2011, during the Durban III Conference, a mid-term evaluation that was done previously (April 2009), revealed the need to revive this momentum and mobilize Member States to translate their commitment into concrete actions.

In an effort to revive the momentum generated by the Durban Conference, 2011 was proclaimed as International Year for People of African Descent. At the end of that International Year, it was recognized that despite the large number of actions undertaken by some Member States, international organizations and civil society, the extensive work needed to live up to expectations of significant progress in the rights of people of African descent could not be achieved in a single year. Therefore, the need for a Decade was recognized by the United Nations to give Member States enough time to meet their commitments. Despite progress achieved, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, de facto and de jure, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage.

Wishing to reinforce the efforts and commitments initiated in Durban’s Conference, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed in December 2014 the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) through its resolution 68/237. Taking account of the burden of history, its consequences and present-day realities, the Decade is centred on the themes of “**Recognition, Justice and Development**”.

The Decade aims to set up a framework and an operational platform that encourage Member States to put policies into place that reduce the social injustice handed down through history from which people of African descent still suffer; to combat racism, racial prejudice and racial discrimination through education; and to promote their contributions to the progress of humanity and to the construction of modern societies. It aims to strengthen, at local, national, regional and international levels, actions and measures to ensure the full enjoyment of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of people of African descent, as well as to ensure their full and equal participation in society.

2. THE UN DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT, 2015-2024

The main objectives of the International Decade for People of African descent are:

- To strengthen national, regional and international action and cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- To promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- To adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and to ensure their full and effective implementation.
- Since this Decade follows on from the World Conference in Durban, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was designated as lead agency. With the support of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, a wide-scale consultation of the key stakeholders (governments, civil society, professional organizations, international and regional organizations, and experts, among others) was held to prepare a draft programme of activities for the Decade, which was submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for adoption (A/RES/69/16).

Thus, the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 to 2024) provides a solid framework to all relevant actors to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the program of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development. It is also a unique opportunity to underline the important contribution made by people of African descent to our societies and to propose concrete measures to promote their full inclusion and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

With the goal to promote this program in Switzerland, the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland and African Foundation for Migration and Development, together with their partners decide to launch in Bern with an opening event, a campaign till 2024, to embrace the goals of the international decade.

3. THE CASE OF SWITZERLAND

The transatlantic slave trade and commerce between the 16th and 19th century had an important and lasting impact on Swiss society – a fact many of us still ignore. Switzerland, or at that time the Helvetic Confederation, was neither a colonial power nor a maritime nation. She was however deeply integrated in the far-reaching European network of finance and trade. In Switzerland, as generally in Europe, the triangular trade was responsible for the arrival of a large range of new products. Swiss trade houses and families actively and heavily invested in the transatlantic slave trade or established colonies of settlement in America. Switzerland's industrialization, e.g. the early textile industry, is related to the rise of a global economic system that made use of the slave trade. Furthermore, the colonial system brought about racist images, views and conceptions of Non-Europeans and their cultures that still have an impact on all of us, a fact proven by recent research. Despite these insights, Switzerland's specific role as part of the colonial system and its implication in the slave trade are little known and have rarely been approached or taught at school.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The organizers warmly welcome the opportunity and the chance the UN Decade for People of African Descents offers. It will help to gain a deeper insight into history, empower the African Community in Switzerland and promote dialogue and diversity in the Swiss society. This occasion equally strengthens the relationship between African migrants in Switzerland and in Europe and their counterparts migrating from North, Central and Southern America who constitute main stakeholders at the launching of the International Decade at UNESCO on the 19th of September 2016 in Paris. These stakeholders declare themselves ready to participate in this endeavour.

The project presented here wants to remedy the stated lack of knowledge and consciousness which exists in the general Swiss population, in official institutions as well as among the African community living in Switzerland. It is in line with this that the 6th annual Diaspora Conference on Migration will be dedicated to inaugurating the Decade. By doing so, it closely associates itself to the proposals and guidance of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent.

It further aims at better understanding the objectives and challenges of the Decade; to share national experiences in implementing its programme of activities; and to discuss strategies to improve synergies between key stakeholders and exchange and share international best practices with international delegates invited to participate at the inauguration.

The main goal of the inauguration ceremony in September 2017 is to raise awareness about the objectives and challenges of the Decade. It offers an opportunity for key stakeholders to share national experiences and good practices regarding its implementation and to discuss strategies of action and explore possibilities of collaboration and partnership.

The project is elaborated in four steps:

1. 2017: Inauguration Conference of the UN Decade for People of African Descent in Switzerland: launching of programs 16th September 2017.
2. 2018-2020: Follow-up programs geared towards the African Community, Swiss schools and organizations engaged in international cooperation: Presentation of three studies done by Federal Commission against Racism (EKR), Office combatting racism (FRB), and Federal Office of Statistics, awareness raising and empowerment workshops and programs. The outcome and recommendations of the conference and studies will form a substantial part of the contents of this follow-up project. This will be conceived as another separate project with its own budget to be edited after the conference when the results of the studies, the outcome and recommendations of the conference are known and discussed by the stakeholders in the Black community. It is also expected to include some best practices and experience from the African Diaspora elsewhere in Europe, in the Americas, reason why African diaspora delegates from these places are also invited to the inauguration for necessary exchange and knowledge sharing.
3. 2020: Presentation of recommendations and guidelines for public offices and institutions: presentation of a jointly developed commitment paper for public and non-profit institutions. Launching of a monitoring point for cases of Anti-Black racism.
4. 2024: Finissage activities

In accordance with the guidance provided for by the UN Decade, the programs will focus on:

- **RECONNAISSANCE:** Open debates and expositions on post-/colonial Swiss history: Swiss implication in transatlantic slave and commercial trade / thematic guided tours developed by Cooperaxion through cities with points of interest having a strong relation to colonialism, slavery or slave trade // Poster exhibition developed by Cooperaxion.
- **JUSTICE:** Empowerment workshops for the target communities, people of African descents living in Switzerland. On the basis of a study on anti-Black racism in Switzerland and its recommendations: development of a jointly formulated position paper in form of a “commitment” that should possibly be signed by politicians and relevant actors. Creation of a monitoring point for cases of Anti-Black racism. Constitution of an autonomic platform to promote information and know-how exchange between different Black organisations
- **DEVELOPMENT:** Promote an encounter with public and non-profit organizations active in international development cooperation inquiring the weight of post-/colonial history and racial issues in their activities. Proposition of basic guidelines for those institutions.
 - Establishment of empowerment programs for People of African Descent living in Switzerland to foster their involvement in development projects in their countries of origin.

5. OUTCOMES

- ❖ Better understanding of Anti-Black racism and putting it in perspective through the presentation of some special cases, experiences and evaluations of anti-Black racism in Switzerland.
- ❖ Redaction of a position paper on anti-Black racism in Switzerland based on the results of the interaction, the intervention, and exchanges amongst major stakeholders. – This would be accompanied by the social partners.
- ❖ Outreach of the state institutions combatting racism to the Diaspora and Civil societies.
- ❖ Better understanding of the role of Switzerland in the Trans-Atlantic trade and colonial commerce.
- ❖ Network of stakeholders and actors combatting racism.
- ❖ Empowerment for the Black community and
- ❖ Engagement of Switzerland and the diaspora in international dialogue against racism and protection of rights of migrants within the framework of the UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals SDG

6. DRAFT PROGRAM AND BUDGET OF PHASE 1: 2017

- Inauguration Event to the UN Decade for People of African Descent
- 16th September at Unia Schweiz, Weltpoststrasse 20, 3000 Bern 15
- 1-day event with conference, thematic guided tour, panel discussions and workshops planned in September 2017

LANGUAGES OF THE CONFERENCE-DIALOGUE: German, French and English with simultaneous translation

MODERATION: Jordan Habia, Mathias Ekah (African Council)

SATURDAY 16TH OF SEPTEMBER 2017: RECOGNITION, JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT

MORNING OPENING CEREMONY

SESSION

- Welcome remark by the president of the African Diaspora in Switzerland
- Opening remark by Dept. of Foreign Affairs /Service for combatting racism FRB/SLR, Federal Commission against Racism EKR/CFR-EDI
- Remark by **Christina Saunders**, Secretary of the UN Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
- The UN Global Compact on Migration and Human rights within the framework of the International Decade for People of African Descent, by **Michele Klein Solomon**, Senior policy advisor to the Director General of International Organization for Migration IOM
- Remark by **Marianne Helfer**, Project manager, section of integration of the city of Bern
- Remark by **Laurent Jimaja**, member of the Executive Council of the municipality of Grand Saconnex in Geneva and first black Mayor in Geneva
- Remark by **Nangbayade Constant Aharh**, President, Communita Africana del Ticino

RECOGNITION

- A Forgotten History: African diaspora in Switzerland since colonialism, slavery and Slave-trade
The importance of historical recognition and its weight on racial offences
Cooperaxion invites – **Lic. Phil. Jovita dos Santos Pinto** assistant at the Interdisciplinary Centre for gender studies Bern University (Postcolonial studies) and **Dr. Noémi Michel, PhD.** in political science, Institute of Citizenship Studies - University of Geneva. Presentation of the role/implication of Switzerland in transatlantic slave and commercial trade and colonialism between 16th and 19th centuries – actual traces of this participation - A guided tour offered by Cooperaxion for the conference participants – through Bern's City center – sites and monuments involved in the transatlantic trade / colonial traces follows immediately after the conference.

**LUNCH
BREAK
AFTERNOON
SESSION**

JUSTICE

1). Report on anti-Black racism in Switzerland from 2000 till 2016 compiled by CRAN (Carrefour de Reflection et d'Action contre le Racisme Anti-Noir), an Observatory for Anti-Black racism in Switzerland by **Dr. André Loembé**, Vice president of CRAN

2). Dialogue with the police by **Manuel Willi**, Berner Kantonspolizei and **Issa Abdullahi**, Swiss African Forum Bern and ggqfon (Gemeinsam gegen Gewalt und Rassismus) Evaluation and input from Allianz gegen Racial Profiling.

INTERVIEW WITH DISCUSSION PANEL – Experts, activists and institutions will present their organizations and activities in their respective domains of work relative to fight against racism. This will help the participants to identify their (potential) counselors, coaches, persons of confidence and partners for promotion of effective dialogue and coordination of efforts in the fight against racism.

On the panel, experts and activists will represent the following areas of racism:

THEMES ON INSTITUTIONAL RACISM	INSTITUTIONS, ACTIVISTS AND EXPERTS (TBC)
Indiscriminate Police control of people of African descent / Racial Profiling	Allianz gegen racial profiling / AllianzNoRacism
Gender racism	Jovita Pinto , Bla*Sh – Black She
Public and Media representation on POC (person of color)	Post-Cit "Penser la différence raciale et postcoloniale" et Collectif Afro-Suisse Tatiana Vieira , Stiftung Radio X
Racism in the school system	Fuat Köçer (Teacher and city counsellor in Bern) Andy Geu , NCBI (National Coalition Building Institute)
Racism at the workplace	Doka Zoltan , UNIA Schweiz
Housing	MV – Mieterinnen- und Mieterverband
Racism in politics and political participation	Halua Pinto de Magalhães : Berner Rassismus Stammtisch, Wir alle sind Bern / Wir alle sind Zürich

**OPEN
FORUM**

Open forum between the presenters, the experts on the panel and the participants with questions and answers

Wrapping up a great event: Conference summary by the Conference Observer, Doris Angst, Human Rights Expert, Hinterkappelen/Bern

Aperitif and Networking

Guided tour over colonial traces in the city of Bern

Celeste Ugochukwu
African Diaspora Council of Switzerland ADCS
+41 79 476 74 83

African Foundation for Migration and Development AFMD
Pat Santschi
+41 78 912 92 29

Collaborators

African Diaspora Council of Switzerland, ADCS
African Foundation for Migration and Development, AFMD
Espace Afrique Internationale, GE
Gilec Consulting, VD
SomaliCare, BE
Somali Swiss Diaspora, ZH
Hakuna Matata, BS
Ajere African Heritage, BE
La Fondation Rodamolembi
Swiss African Forum, SAF
Ajere African Heritage, BE
Coeur d'Afrique, NE
Somali TV Swiss



African Diaspora Council of Switzerland



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Service de lutte contre le racisme SLR



Stadt Bern