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Statement by the Secretary-General of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States on the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

Brussels, 23 August 2020/OACPS: Very few events have had as cataclysmic an effect on the lives of as many people as the Transatlantic Slave Trade which displaced between 10 and 15 million Africans. The descendants of the survivors of the middle passage, today constitute the members of the African Diaspora. The Secretary-General of the Organisation of African, Pacific and Caribbean States (OACPS), H.E. Mr. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, remembers, on today's observance of the **International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition**, the many lives lost as a result of this tragedy, salutes the survivors and recognizes the work of those who lead the charge to eliminate the remaining vestiges of this horrendous period of our universal history.

The theme for this year's International Day of Remembrance, observed on the 23rd of August is, "**Confronting Slavery's Legacy of Racism Together**", and seeks to call out the effects of this construct on our societies, especially those of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. During slavery, black lives mattered only in so far as they were property. One hundred plus years later, we are still fighting to overcome the stigmas left by slavery, which are deeply entrenched in our psyches, our cultures and our institutions, and which also disproportionately affect the most vulnerable members of our societies, especially women and children.

We are now in the second half of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), which is dedicated to strategies for fighting racism and discrimination. As we debate race, discrimination and injustice, as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement – individually and collectively – we need to ask ourselves, what is the role that each of us can play?

Despite the abolition of the slave trade, racism, slavery and trafficking are still of great concern. Like the current COVID-19 pandemic, these global scourges demand a global response. The only way to combat these stains on our humanity is through united action. For the Secretary-General, multilateral cooperation, such as South-South, North-South and Triangular Cooperation, which draws on the potential contribution of all actors and establishes inclusive systems, is essential if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and build stable and democratic societies.

The Pan-African movement provided the impetus for the creation of institutions such as the African Union (AU) and our own Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States to combat slavery's divisive legacy. These organisations provide evidence of the power of unity and solidarity among the African diaspora, to ensure that we can all advance, without leaving any one behind.

H.E. Mr. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti today renews the call for global solidarity to promote inclusion, racial equality, tolerance and justice for all. He urges conscious action to eliminate and eradicate racism, xenophobia, and exclusion, as well as the societal issues they produce.

Recognising the insidious nature of racism, the Secretary-General also calls for the exposure of systemic racism, and the urgent need to dismantle the systems and structures which support racism. The time has come for a coordinated focus on converting the tragedies of the past into a springboard for inclusive and united progress in the future.

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