

COMMENTS 78<sup>th</sup> SESSION UNGA: DR FARID I MUHAMMAD, CHAIRMAN OHBCUD, INC

GREETINGS EVERYONE !

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, ESTEEMED MODERATOR, DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS, HONORED ATTENDEES, AND RESPECTED VIRTUAL GUESTS.

WE EXTEND SPECIAL APPRECIATION TO MADAME DIRECTOR AHUNNA EZIAKONWA OF UNDP REGIONAL BUREAU FOR AFRICA, AS WELL AS DR BLADE NZIMANDE, SOUTH AFRICA'S MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION --- FOR THEIR WISDOM AND LEADERSHIP IN HELPING FACILITATE TODAY'S HISTORIC SESSION. THEIR UNWAVERING SUPPORT OF AND COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HBCU COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES IS WELL RESPECTED BY ALL.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS ALSO WARMLY EXTENDED TO DR RAYMOND GILPIN, DR AYODELE ODUSOLA AND THE ENTIRE UNDP AFRICA TEAM. THEIR FRIENDSHIP AND COLLABORATION OVER THE YEARS HAS BEEN INVALUABLE. THE OFFICE OF HBCU DEVELOPMENT & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (OHBCUD) HAS MAINTAINED A MOU WITH THE BUREAU SINCE 2019. IT WAS ORIGINALLY SIGNED AT THE MARGINS OF THE 74<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNGA. THIS HISTORIC AGREEMENT PROVIDENTIALLY COINCIDED WITH THE 400-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE IN 1619.

FURTHERMORE, AS WILL BE ADDITIONALLY RECOGNIZED DURING THE COURSE OF TODAY'S PROCEEDINGS, WE EXTEND SPECIAL RESPECT TO MEMBERS OF OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HBCU LEADERSHIP, AND OTHERS WHO TOOK TIME TO JOIN US IN PERSON TODAY. WE RESPECTFULLY TRUST ALL PROTOCOLS ARE DULY OBERSERVED.

AS REFLECTED IN THE CONCEPT NOTE FOR TODAY'S SESSION, AFRICA IS A DEVELOPMENT PARADOX. THAT IS TO SAY, IT REMAINS A CONTINENT THAT IS RICH IN MINERALS, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENORMOUS HUMAN POTENTIAL. HOWEVER, IT ALSO REMAINS HOME TO 33 OF THE WORLD'S 46 LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND TWO-THIRDS OF ITS EXTREMELY POOR POPULATION. MANY OBSTACLES STILL OBSTRUCT THE EFFICIENT AND TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF UN AGENDA 2030 AND AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063.

AS HAS BEEN DESCRIBED, IT IS WITHIN THIS CONTEXT THAT ON MAY 2, 2023, IN THIS VERY ROOM, H.E. DR BLADE NZIMANDE AND HIS TEAM, ALONG WITH SENIOR STAFF FROM UNDP AFRICA, MET IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY WITH MEMBERS OF OUR BOARD AND AN ASSORTMENT OF DEANS FROM THE HBCU COMMUNITY. THIS INITIAL AND EXPLORATORY MEETING RESULTED IN AN AGREEMENT TO CONDUCT THIS JOINT SIDE EVENT THAT HAS NOW COME TO FRUITION DURING THE 78<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

AS SO ELOQUENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY STATED IN HIS OPENING REMARKS, THE MINISTER HAS ESSENTIALLY CHALLENGED THE LEADERSHIP OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION WHICH SERVE PREDOMINANTLY PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT THROUGHOUT THE DIASPORA --- TO COME TOGETHER, TO BOLDLY AND UNAPOLOGETICALLY CREATE NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS THAT WILL ADDRESS THE COMMON STRUGGLES FACED BY PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT EVERYWHERE.

AS A START, AREAS OF ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL COLLABORATION NEED TO BE IDENTIFIED BETWEEN AND AMONG SOUTH AFRICA'S DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION & TRAINING (DHET), DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE & INNOVATION (DSI), THEIR HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED INSTITUTIONS (HDIs), THE UNIVERSITIES OF SOUTH AFRICA (USAf) --- THESE SHOULD IDEALLY WORK IN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (HBCUs) HERE IN THE UNITED STATES. THIS CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE WITH FULL COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT FROM BOTH UNDP AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN UNION.

THEREFORE, OUR COLLECTIVE CHALLENGE HERE TODAY IS TO BEGIN BUILDING SUCH FOUNDATIONAL INITIATIVES, PARTNERSHIPS AND LONG-TERM PROGRAMS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN COLLABORATION WITH UNDP AFRICA WE HAVE ESTABLISHED AN INTERNATIONAL DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVE (IDLI) PROGRAM. WITH UNFORTUNATELY VERY LITTLE RESOURCES, OVER A 3-YEAR PERIOD, WE HAVE SERVED A TOTAL OF 226 AFRICA-BASED REGISTRANTS FROM 26 COUNTRIES. OVER THE YEARS 16 HBCUs, PREDOMINANTLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS (PBIs) OF HIGHER EDUCATION, PLUS THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA HAVE PARTICIPATED.

**BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT, WE HAVE PROVEN THAT WITH CLARITY OF PURPOSE, SINCERITY AND EFFICIENT COORDINATION WITH OUR BELOVED PARTNERS AT UNDP AFRICA --  
- TOGETHER, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS AND ACHIEVE ALL THAT IS GOOD.  
THEREFORE, THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US IS TO EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZE AND HARNESS THE ENORMOUS YET UNTAPPED HUMAN AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES THAT EXIST THROUGHOUT THE AFRICAN DIASPORA.**

**FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT ALONE PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING FACTS:**

- 1. IN 2022, THE US INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) COLLECTED \$5.03 TRILLION IN FEDERAL TAXES FROM AMERICAN CITIZENS (THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE BILLIONS OF ADDITIONAL TAXES COLLECTED AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS);**
- 2. 134,224,000 US CITIZENS PAID FEDERAL TAXES AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE TAX INCOME FOR JUST FY 2022;**
- 3. AFRICAN-AMERICANS MADE UP 13% (17,449,120) OF THOSE CONTRIBUTING TO THIS INCOME;**
- 4. THE MEDIAN FEDERAL TAX PAID BY AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN TAX PAYER FOR FY 2022 WAS \$4,647 (OR ROUGHLY \$4,647,00 FOR EVERY 1000 US TAX-PAYING AFRICAN-AMERICAN CITIZENS);**
- 5. IN SHORT, LITERALLY BILLIONS OF FEDERAL TAX MONIES ARE PAID EXCLUSIVELY AND ANNUALLY BY PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE UNITED STATES ALONE.**
- 6. YET, AN INCREASINGLY ANACHRONISITC SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK, FAILS TO PROPERLY CONSIDER AND ADDRESS THE UNIQUE, HISTORICALLY JUSTIFIED AND LEGITIMATE HUMAN RIGHTS GRIEVANCES OF THE DESCENDENTS OF FORMERLY ENSLAVED ETHNIC MINORITIES LIVNG WITHIN THEIR MIDST, WHO STILL SUFFER FROM THE LINGERING EFFECTS OF THAT TRAUMA;**
- 7. INSTEAD, IT EXCERCISES UNILATERAL FISCAL CONTROL AND DOMINATION OVER EVERY AREA OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING IMPACTING AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND OTHER MARGINALIZED ETHNIC/CITIZEN POPULATIONS, WHO ARE UNABLE TO RAISE OR HAVE THEIR COLLECTIVE NEEDS ADDRESSED THROUGH THE PRESENT ELECTORAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM.**

WHAT NATIONALLY AND LEGISLATIVELY RECOGNIZED COMPONENT OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION EXISTS -- ONE BEARING ITS HISTORICAL, INSTITUTIONAL, AND LEGAL LEGACY – OTHER THAN ITS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL AND CONTINUOUSLY WELL INSTITUTIONALIZED COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY OF HBCUs AND PREDOMINANTLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS (PBIs) OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES? SUCH INSTITUTIONS ARE ALREADY RESPONSIBLE FOR 85% OF OUR MEDICAL DOCTORS, 80% OF OUR FEDERAL JUDGES, 40% OF OUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, 60% OF OUR ENGINEERING DEGRESS (INCLUDING 40% OF STEM). SHOULD THEY NOT BE REGARDED AS AN APPROPRIATE ENTITY ENTITLED TO EXERCISE SOME PROPERLY NEGOTIATED RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY OVER SOME PORTION OF THE TAX MONIES INDEPENDENTLY GENERATED BY THE DESCENDENT OF THE FORMERLY ENSLAVED PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT TO THE BENEFIT OF OUR PEOPLE. ARE NOT THE STRUGGLING NATIONS OF AFRICA AND THE SOUTH ATTEMPTING TO FORGE AND CREATE NEW OPTIONS MORE BEFITTING TO THEIR UNIQUE GEO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES, TO BE DETERMINED AND EXERCISED BY THEMSELVES, RATHER THAN BEING DETERMINED EXTERNALLY?

MY APOLOGIES, IT IS NOT MY INTENT TO FURTHER EXPLORE NOR SUGGEST ANY PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS TO SUCH HIGHLY COMPLEX AND SENSITIVE ISSUES. THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT THE TIME NOR THE APPROPRIATE VENUE. RATHER, THESE ARE QUESTIONS FOR THE DISTANT FUTURE. I AM SIMPLY TAKING THE LIBERTY TO RAISE THEM NOW, BEFORE THIS DISTINGUISHED GATHERING, FOR OUR FURTHER THOUGHT.

TO DATE, THE LESSONS THUS FAR LEARNED FROM OUR ADMITTEDLY SPARTAN AND FULLY COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH UNDP AFRICA HAVE SHOWN WHAT CAN BE DONE, PARTICULARLY WHEN THERE ARE SINCERE EFFORTS MADE TO SUPPORT UN AGENDA 2030 AND AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063. THE SDGs PROVIDE AN ALREADY INTERNATIONALLY SANCTIONED, EVIDENCE-BASED AND RIGHTEOUS PATH TO HELP AMELIORATE THE DISPROPORTIONATE SUFFERING OF NOT ONLY PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT BUT FOR STRUGGLING HUMANITY EVERYWHERE.

**THEREFORE, IN TODAY'S HISTORIC PROCEEDINGS WE HOPE TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1. IDENTIFY PROGRESS TO DATE ON EXISTING PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS CONDUCTED BY THE SA MINISTRY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HBCUs;**
- 2. SHOWCASE THE MOST PRODUCTIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS WITH THE INTENT TO UPSCALE THEIR OPERATIONS;**
- 3. IDENTIFY 2-3 HIGH PRIORITY AREAS OF NEEDED PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA'S HDIs AND HBCUs (especially those in harmony with SDGs and AU Agenda 2063);**
- 4. SEEK GUIDANCE FROM UNDP AFRICA AND OTHERS RELATIVE TO GENERATING ONGOING FISCAL SUPPORT FOR DHET/HDI AND HBCU PARTNERSHIPS; and**
- 5. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN ONGOING WORKING PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT OF UN MEMBER STATES, INSTITUTIONS SERVING PREDOMINANTLY PERSONS OF AFRICAN DESCENT, UNDP AFRICA AND THE FINANCE SECTOR HUB, SA MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTIONS, PRIVATE SECTOR, NGOs/CSOs and COGNATE ORGANIZATIONS.**

**IN CONCLUSION, WE NOTE THAT HBCUs, BY NATURE OF THEIR COMMON HISTORY, REMAIN FULLY EMBEDDED AND ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE MOST BLIGHTED SECTORS OF AFRICAN DISASPORA COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES. THEREFORE, WE STAND READY TO WORK WITH OUR NEW PARTNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE ON THE CONTINENT. SIMILARLY, WE STAND READY TO WORK WITH OUR HOME-BASED ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE NATIONAL HBCU BUSINESS DEANS ROUNDTABLE IN ITS EFFORTS TO HELP CREATE AND EMPOWER REGIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS.**

**WE APPRECIATE EVERYONE'S KIND PARTICIPATION IN THIS UNIQUE AND HISTORIC SESSION. WE PRAY FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY, GOOD HEALTH AND A SUCCESSFUL MEETING. WE THANK YOU !**

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