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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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**AU RECOGNITION OF THE 400<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE,  
*Item proposed by the Republic of Kenya***

## CONCEPT NOTE ON RECOGNITION BY THE AU SUMMIT OF THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE IN 2019

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Transatlantic Slave Trade will be 400 years old in 2019. It is noted that this important year of commemoration follows a venerable tradition of the African Union Summit and Commission making strong declarations in remembrance of this uniquely damaging chapter of African history, and, simultaneously, embracing the resulting diaspora of African peoples. Maintaining this tradition of memory and connection, in marking the 400th anniversary of the transatlantic slave trade, dovetails well with the theme of the upcoming Summit: 'Refugees, Returnees and IDPs in Africa: Towards durable solutions to forced displacement.' After all, the kidnapping and forceful transport of Africans, by their millions, out of the continent and to the Americas, and elsewhere, remains the single largest, and longest lasting, chapters of forced migration in human history. Commemorating this anniversary will at a minimum serve to remind Africans of the historical experience of the African diaspora which continues to shape even contemporary African migration, conflict and economies.

2. H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, has a strong desire to ensure that Africa commemorates this anniversary and uses the year to revitalise the social, cultural and economic linkages between Africa and its diaspora bordering the Atlantic basin. His administration has prioritised Pan-African solidarity and unity, and as such has been a champion of the worldwide African diaspora. One instance of this commitment, which dovetails with the subject at hand, is Kenya's leading role, among other African states, in successfully advocating for the erection of The Ark of Return, a permanent memorial to the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, that was unveiled in March 2015, at the United Nations Visitors Plaza in New York.

3. H.E. President Kenyatta has agreed to be patron to R400 Consortium and its sponsorship of a major campaign to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the transatlantic slave trade. He is looking forward to urging other Heads of State and Government to join him in supporting this initiative. The consortium is the effort of African American religious, civic and business leaders.

4. The R400 initiative seeks to go beyond commemorating the 400 years that have passed and to shape the next 100 years positively for African peoples by reconnecting, reconciling, reclaiming and rebuilding. It is guided by a strong focus on African unity on a global level being utilised as a tool to build economic prosperity. Its values are the embrace of diversity and inclusion, high performance, integrity and trust, partnership and advocacy. The movement will bring together Africans, the African Diaspora and African Americans.

### RATIONALE

5. By the Summit of Heads of State and Government making special note of 2019 with a declaration, it will remind Africans and the world of the unique experience of the continent. It will further offer today's refugee, returnee and IDP challenges a historical resonance that can impact the search for longer term solutions. Africa has witnessed the powerful development

role that the Indian and Chinese diasporas, for instance, have had in the economic transformation of their native countries. Remittances by African-born migrants, particularly in the West, are also a significant driver of economies in most African countries. By African member states and leaders choosing to make this anniversary a notable event, particularly in considering policies that encourage the African diaspora reconnecting positively with the continent, Africa will gain transformative opportunities for its economies and peoples.

## OBJECTIVE

6. In addition to commemoration of the past, this initiative seeks to drive the reconnection and reengagement that has a concrete impact on economic prosperity and building a strengthened sense of pride and unity. It will in this way profile the opportunities of investing in Africa by its diaspora, Africa's achievements, and the desirability of reconnection and reengagement. In this way, its economic impact, at a minimum, can be a positive contribution to the durable solutions being sought to solve the challenges causing large-scale production of refugees, returnees and IDPs in Africa.

7. The following is requested for consideration by the African Union Heads of State and Government and the leadership of the AU Commission: That the Heads of State and Government agree a resolution or declaration recognising the common destiny of all African peoples throughout the world and calling for a strengthening of cultural, political and economic linkages going forward. Its wording could be thus,

**WE**, Heads of State and Government of the African Union, assembled on xx February, 2019,

**Evoking** the unity of all African peoples, bound together by neighbourliness, cultural affinity, historical experiences, our common struggles for independence and dignity, our civilisational heritage, and our common destiny with all peoples of African descent;

**Recalling** the depredations and evils of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, its industrialisation of racism, dispossession, discrimination and dehumanisation;

**Further recalling**, with pride, the strong spirit of resistance that responded to the evils of the slave trade, the rise of the Pan African movement in multiple continents and its continued inspiration to us African peoples;

**Reaffirming** our commitment to the unity of African peoples, to building an integrated Africa, to forging cultural, political, social and economic linkages that further the Pan Africanist dream among all peoples of African descent;

1. **Request** the African Union Commission to work with well-organised and well-meaning initiatives to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in 2019 by holding and participating in events and engaging African states to send appropriate representatives.
2. **Urge** all people of African descent to make this a year of reconnection and reengagement with our African identities, collective interests and to seek to forge practical and ambitious initiatives that will build our unity and offer prosperity to our peoples.

3. **Urge** all Member States of the Union to consider immigration, economic, cultural and social policies that allow the Africans descended from the victims and survivors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to reconnect and reengage with their brethren in the African continent.

#### **OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES**

- A. A breakfast meeting on 11 February 2019, hosted by H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta on how the continent can concretely engage with its worldwide diaspora, and to consider participating in a major event of commemoration and investment promotion in North Carolina in the United States in late 2019.
- B. That the African Union representative in the United States be requested to give every assistance to the R400 initiative and its events in 2019 and 2020 to engage with African states and their representatives. In particular:
  - Memorialising of the past 400 years in 2019 using a major event in October in the United States that will bring together Africans in the US and African Americans to acknowledge the fortitude, resilience and progress made by all those of African descent.
  - Launching of an Africa-focused Trade Hub in tandem with the October event. This will be an International Trade Hub at The Park Expo and Convention Center in Charlotte North Carolina.
  - Connecting businesses and African and African-American business leaders in different sectors (called 'cohorts') from Africa and the United States to deliver business partnerships.
  - A major event in 2020 to celebrate the next four years of a Pan African ecosystem of Education, Economics, Healthcare, Energy, Media, Philanthropy and Cities.

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# AU recognition of the 400th Anniversary of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Item proposed by the Republic of Kenya

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