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**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR CHARLES AMEL DOUBANE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
TO THE UNITED NATIONS, DELIVERED
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
BEFORE THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**AGENDA ITEM 114: FOLLOW-UP TO THE COMMEMORATION OF THE TWO-
HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE
TRADE**

New York, 17 Décembre 2012

A Vérifier au prononcé

Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations

866 United Nations Plaza

Suite 444

New York,

NY 10017

Telephone: (646) 415-9122, (646) 415-9281

Fax: (646) 415-9149

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on this important debate on Agenda item 114 entitled “Follow up to the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade”. We thank the Secretary General for his reports provided under this agenda item.

Allow me at the outset, to convey our appreciation and commend the Member States of the Caribbean Community, (CARICOM) for their commitment and efforts in ensuring that we continue to reflect and examine the past injustices that had an adverse impact on our history. But more importantly to celebrate the resilience of the human spirit to survive such adversity and the efforts that ensued to bring this unfortunate period of history to an end.

Mr. President,

Six years ago, the UN General Assembly designated 25th March as the **International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-Hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade**. Recognizing the ever lasting effect of slavery in the modern world, Member States acknowledged that slavery was at the heart of “profound social and economic inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice, which continue to affect people of African descent today.” As the largest forced displacement in history, the transatlantic slave trade tore millions of Africans from their homes, dragged them in chains to the Americas and sold them as slaves. Its most salient outcome was the dehumanization of people of African descent, which led to a disturbing legacy of racism and racial discrimination in many countries.

Mr. President,

This year the United Nations observed the Fifth International Day to commemorate the victims of the slave trade which was celebrated under the theme “The Living Legacy of 30 Million Untold Stories”. This occasion recognized that the dearth of inquiry into the experiences of enslaved Africans, and a continuing gap in the literature regarding their individual and collective perspectives. This theme was relevant due to the fact that scholarly literature on the slave

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trade and slavery has provided deep insights into the magnitude of the brutal treatment and the condition of slaves, but only a limited number of narratives have addressed the true identities of enslaved Africans, their beliefs, value systems, and expertise. As such, the diversity of skills and technological know-how which they brought to the Americas, and their invaluable contribution to nation-building there have not been sufficiently acknowledged.

In this regard Mr. President, African Group feels that more efforts are needed in promoting education and outreach programs to ensure that this gap is filled. We therefore appreciate the work of the UNESCO, committee of Permanent Representatives as well as the department of Public Information for their outreach work, including by establishing new and continuing scholarship in this field in order to provide a more insightful look into the history of enslavement during the 400-year trade, as well as the legacy from the perspective of the victims.

We further express appreciation for the programme of education and outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery for 2011, organized by the Department of Public Information (DPI). We also encourage that Department to ensure that the annual commemorative activities were a fitting and solemn tribute to slavery's victims

Mr. President,

One of the ways of sustaining lasting outreach effort of slavery and slave trade is the erection of a permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and slave trade. We therefore welcome the initiative that has so far been taken by state members of the Caribbean Community in this regard. We further recognize the importance and necessity of sustained voluntary contribution in order to achieve in a timely manner the goals of erecting the permanent memorial. Several countries have contributed to the Trust Fund for the Permanent Memorial. I am glad to report that several African Countries are among the contributors. In this regard, the African Group would like to congratulate all those who have contributed and we invite other countries to contribute to this worthy project.

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The African Group remains firmly committed to this project as we believe the Permanent Memorial will serve to remind us of the heroic actions of the slaves and other abolitionists who in the face of grave danger and adversity stood up to be counted. It will also serve as an education resource and a statue of lifelong learning, a reconstruction of the past molding the future and a constant reminder of how vulnerable humanity is.

In this regard, the African Group wishes to acknowledge the effort and dedication of the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations under the leadership of His Excellency Ambassador Raymond Wolfe for spear-heading and leading this very important initiative since 2007.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the African Group's support for the efforts by the United Nations system and countries in creating awareness on issues relating to slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade over the last year. It is our sincere hope that more shall be done in the coming year to honor all those victims of slave trade, the brave abolitionists and the collective international efforts that led to the abolition of slave trade and slavery.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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Telephone: (646) 415-9122, (646) 415-9281 *Fax: (646) 415-9149*