

Ending Slavery: Forum on Combatting Slavery Today
Event to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of
Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

ACC&C Chapel, Barton, ACT 7.30 – 9.15 pm 27 March 2018

UNIC Director's Introductory Notes

Thank you Stephen.

Excellences, Chris Crewther, MP, fellow panellists – Carolyn, Grace and Luis, ladies and gentlemen thank you all for joining us to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

In beginning, I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we are meeting, the Ngunnawal people, and to pay my respects to their elders both past and present and also to acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here this evening.

Let me also thank Stephen and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture for their generosity in hosting this event and also to our other partners, Anti-Slavery Australia and STOP THE TRAFFIK for their efforts in bringing it together.

As we have heard from Stephen, this evening's speakers will focus on aspects of modern slavery and the work, both through policy and civil society action, to combat this persistent and pervasive issue.

Before we hear from the experts, I would like to talk briefly about the background of the International Day which we are marking, the exhibit behind you which I hope you will all have a chance to look at, and to deliver the UN Secretary-General's remarks for the Day.

(Pause)

In commemoration of the memory of the more than 15 million men, women and children who were victims of an international trading system that lasted over 400 years, the General Assembly, in its resolution of 17 December 2007, declared 25 March the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Each year, the Day offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

Today, when we still see the manifestations of servitude and bondage, 70 years on from the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its emphatic language in Article 4: "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms".

The resolution that established the Day additionally called for an outreach programme to mobilize educational institutions, civil society and other organizations to inculcate in future generations the "causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade, and to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice." It did this by establishing The United Nations Remember Slavery Programme, which builds on the work of UNESCO's Slave Route project. The Programme organizes remembrance activities and produces educational tools throughout the year, working closely with UNESCO and the global network of United Nations information centres, such as ours here in Canberra.

A different theme is chosen each year to guide the commemorative activities. The theme for the 2018, “Remember Slavery: Triumphs and Struggles for Freedom and Equality”, looks to celebrate the many accomplishments and gains of people of African descent from slavery to present.

It acknowledges the struggles and challenges towards freedom and equality and pays tribute to the Black men and women who campaigned and advocated for those liberties that many around the world enjoy today. At the same time, it also aims to raise awareness of their legacy of resistance and sustained advocacy.

The exhibit on display, *Remember Slavery: A legacy of Black Achievement*, produced in partnership with the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, United Kingdom, articulates the theme of the year and is based on the “Black Achievers Wall” at the museum. It features 22 notable personalities of various backgrounds, eras, regions and disciplines, who paved the way for civil rights, human rights, recognition and justice for people of African descent in Africa and the diaspora.

Please do take some time this evening before you leave to view the exhibit if you have not already had a chance. I am sure you will be met by many familiar faces. One such figure made history at the United Nations itself: Ralph Bunche, the first African-American to win a Nobel Prize. One of the most respected and celebrated international civil servants in the history of our Organization, he once said “hearts are the strongest when they beat in response to noble ideals”. Our work at the United Nations today builds on his achievements.

I hope that you, like me, will be inspired by the reminder of the ways in which the people of Africa and their descendants have helped to shape societies

across the globe. In a world where racism and prejudice have not yet been stamped out, it is crucial that we remember and honour such contributions.

And now it is my honour to read for you the UN Secretary-General's message on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade:

The epically shameful transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced and legally sanctioned migration in human history.

More than 15 million men, women and children from Africa were enslaved.

This Day of Remembrance was established to acknowledge a brutal chapter in human history, and to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

As we mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, let us honour those who perished or suffered under slavery.

Let us celebrate the gains of people of African descent.

And let us press, every day and everywhere, to defend the dignity of every human being.

Thank you.