

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL (ECOSOCC)

Statement by Mr. Khalid Boudali

**Presiding Officer of the African Union Economic, Social and
Cultural Council**

03 February 2025 (Arusha, Tanzania)

- 1. His Excellency José Maria Pereira Neves, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde and Guest of Honour together with your delegation**
- 2. Hon. Lady Justice Imani D. Aboud, President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights**
- 3. Her Excellency Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission in virtual attendance**
- 4. Hon. Ambassador Shaib Mussa, representing the Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania**
- 5. Your Lordships and Your Ladyships Chief Justices of AU Member States**
- 6. Excellencies Members of the Permanent Representatives Committee to the AU**
- 7. Excellencies Heads of Organs and Institutions of the AU here present and in virtual attendance**
- 8. Eminent Jurists, Fellow CSO Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen here present or in virtual attendance**

It is both a privilege and a historic opportunity to address this august assembly on a theme that transcends mere discourse and enters the sacred domain of justice and rule of law. The question of reparations is not one of political rhetoric or symbolic atonement, it is an indisputable legal, moral, and political imperative engrained in the principles of justice, human rights, international law, and the sovereignty of nations over their historical narratives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to express my deep gratification to see the 2025 theme of our continental judicial organ coincides with that of its mother organization.



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For centuries, Africa has borne the weight of an imposed legacy one marked by the extractive violence of colonial subjugation, the transatlantic slave trade, economic pillage, and structural disenfranchisement. The ramifications of these atrocities are not confined to history; they permeate the contemporary socioeconomic structures of our nations and multilateral institutions, manifesting in entrenched inequalities, dispossession, and a global order that continues to perpetuate asymmetries of power and prosperity. Justice demands that we recognize these injustices not as relics of the past, but as enduring violations necessitating reparative redress.

Reparation, therefore, constitutes the highest articulation of transitional justice, a mechanism that rebalances the scales of equity, reaffirms the inherent dignity of those wronged, and reconstructs the socioeconomic fabrics that were systematically dismantled. They are not an appeal for charity or a negotiation for historical remembrance; they are a lawful entitlement enshrined in the principles of jus cogens, international and regional human rights frameworks, and precedents.

The imperative of reparative justice is not merely moral; it is legally grounded in international jurisprudence, including the United Nations Basic Principles on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, as well as several legal precedents established by international tribunals. Precedents from the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice, and the legal frameworks established in cases of state liability unequivocally affirm that historical injustices of this magnitude necessitate legal restitution, economic compensation, and structural rehabilitation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we convene today for the Official Opening of the 2025 Judicial Year of the African Court under the theme Advancing Justice through Reparations, our deliberations must move beyond rhetorical affirmations. This is not the moment for conciliatory gestures, nor for apathetic acknowledgments. This is the time for unequivocal collective commitments, for policy formulation,

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and for the unequivocal institutionalization of reparative mechanisms that uphold the integrity of justice. Africa, Africans, and people of African descent must position ourselves collectively to demand our inviolable right to full redress through reparation, restitution, resource reclamation, institutional capacity-building and legislative frameworks that ensure non-repetition.

We must also recognize that the discourse on reparations is not solely retrospective; it is inherently prospective. It is about reclaiming the future as much as it is about rectifying the past. Reparations must serve as the scaffolding for Africa's renaissance, ensuring that our continent's economic, political, and intellectual capital is restored to its rightful custodians, the African people. This entails the restitution of stolen artifacts, the annulment of odious debts rooted in exploitative histories, the restoration of land sovereignty, and the reconfiguration of global governance systems that continue to marginalize Africa's voice in the international order.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The passage of time does not in any way diminish accountability, nor does it absolve the architects of historical injustices from their legal and moral responsibilities. As custodians of Africa's destiny, we must decisively advance a legally structured, diplomatically coordinated, and politically fortified collective demand for reparations.

Let this gathering be not a mere dialogue but unmistakable affirmation of Africa's inalienable right to reparative justice. Our affirmation is not an appeal for recognition, but a demand anchored in international law, reinforced by a perpetuating historical injustice, and pursued with unwavering collective resolve for reparation. Justice is not a mere concession; it is an inviolable right. ECOSOCC, as the people-centered organ of the AU representing the African grassroots, will advocate for nothing less than full and irrevocable reparations.

Ladies and Gentlemen



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ECOSOCC and the African Court, in close coordination with the AUC and Member States, have been mandated by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to undertake an AU-wide engagement on the subject of reparations. I therefore expect us to join hands to ensure the successful implementation of the 2025 theme of year.

As I conclude, I would like to express the commitment of ECOSOCC and the wider Civil Society family in Africa and beyond to support this noble cause and accompany you as you implement your activities under the theme “Advancing Justice through Reparations” and that of the African Union theme for 2025 “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations”.

I thank you.

End!