



Project	ARTS EXHIBITION: THE BLACK PANTHERS OF SWITZERLAND
Key points:	Promote the image and cultural identity of People of African Descent, animate socio-cultural dialogue, inclusion, social cohesion and peaceful cohabitation thereby setting a positive migration narrative in the spirit of recognition, justice and development
Organization:	African Foundation for Migration and Development, Peripherie Arts Gallerie, Ajere African Heritage in collaboration with PopUp Dreieck Gallery
Project length:	22nd October – 4th November 2018
Total Budget:	CHF 10'320.-

1. HISTORICAL ASPECT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are around 200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent living in the Americas. Many millions more live in Europe and other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. Whether as descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, they often times constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups. The promotion and protection of human rights of people of African descent (PAD) has been a priority concern for the United Nations.

In 2001, the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, which had recognized the slave trade and slavery as “crimes against humanity” and people of African descent as victims who continue to be victims of its consequences. The Conference adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action proposing concrete measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Ten years later, in 2011, during the Durban III Conference, a mid-term evaluation that was done previously (April 2009), revealed the need to revive this momentum and mobilize Member States to translate their commitment into concrete actions.

In an effort to revive the momentum generated by the Durban Conference, 2011 was proclaimed as International Year for People of African Descent. At the end of that International Year, it was recognized that despite the large number of actions undertaken by some Member States, international organizations and civil society, the extensive work needed to live up to expectations of significant progress in the rights of people of African descent could not be achieved in a single year. Therefore, the need for a Decade was recognized by the United Nations to give Member States enough time to meet their commitments. Despite progress achieved, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, de facto and de jure, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage.

Wishing to reinforce the efforts and commitments initiated in Durban’s Conference, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed in December 2014 the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) through its resolution 68/237. Taking account of the burden of history, its consequences and present-day realities, the Decade is centred on the themes of “**Recognition, Justice and Development**”.

2. THE UN DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT, 2015-2024

The main objectives of the International Decade for People of African descent are:

The Decade aims to set up a framework and an operational platform that encourage Member States to put policies into place that reduce the social injustice handed down through history from which people of African descent still suffer; to combat racism, racial prejudice and racial discrimination through education; and to **promote their contributions to the progress of humanity** and to the construction of modern societies. It aims to strengthen, at local, national, regional and international levels, actions and measures to ensure the full enjoyment of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of people of African descent, as well as to

ensure their full and equal participation in society.

Thus, the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 to 2024) provides a solid framework to all relevant actors to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the program of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development. It is also a unique opportunity to underline the important contribution made by people of African descent to our societies and to propose concrete measures to promote their full inclusion and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The organizers warmly welcome the opportunity and the chance the UN Decade for People of African Descents offers. It will help to gain a deeper insight into history, empower the African Community in Switzerland and promote dialogue and diversity in the Swiss society. This occasion equally strengthens the relationship between African migrants in Switzerland and in Europe and their counterparts migrating from North, Central and Southern America who constitute main stakeholders at the launching of the International Decade at UNESCO on the 19th of September 2016 in Paris. These stakeholders declare themselves ready to participate in this endeavour.

3. THE CASE OF SWITZERLAND

The transatlantic slave trade and commerce between the 16th and 19th century had an important and lasting impact on Swiss society – a fact many of us still ignore. Switzerland, or at that time the Helvetic Confederation, was neither a colonial power nor a maritime nation. She was however deeply integrated in the far-reaching European network of finance and trade. In Switzerland, as generally in Europe, the triangular trade was responsible for the arrival of a large range of new products. Swiss trade houses and families actively and heavily invested in the transatlantic slave trade or established colonies of settlement in America. Switzerland's industrialization, e.g. the early textile industry, is related to the rise of a global economic system that made use of the slave trade. Furthermore, the colonial system brought about racist images, views and conceptions of Non-Europeans and their cultures that still have an impact on all of us, a fact proven by recent research. Despite these insights, Switzerland's specific role as part of the colonial system and its implication in the slave trade are little known and have rarely been approached or taught at school.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE UN-DECADE IN SWITZERLAND

- Few months after the declaration of the decade in Switzerland, Celeste Ugochukwu, Executive Director of AFMD and the then president of the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland and member of the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism (EKR) initiated a motion at the plenary requesting the commission to undertake a scientific study on the status of anti-Black racism in Switzerland and make recommendations for improvement. This call was duly deliberated and accepted for a scientific study in a legal perspective. At the same time, the Service for combatting racism (FRB), State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics also mandated similar studies on diaspora socio-anthropologic and Swiss perspective respectively. A couple of events are taking place in Switzerland within the decade.
- In September 2017, the African Foundation for Migration and Development and the African Diaspora Council in collaboration with other partners launched officially the decade in Switzerland in the presence of United Nations, federal, cantonal and municipal authorities as well as the diaspora and the civil society.
- On April 19-20, 2018, a conference was held at the University of Bern on the theme "From Colonization to Globalization". It was organized by the Institute for the History of ETH Zurich, the Interdisciplinary Center for Gender Studies (IZFG) and the Historical Institute of the University of Bern,

and supported by the Center for Global Studies of the University of Bern. The conference scientifically examines Switzerland's role in the transatlantic slave trade.

- 3rd of May 2018, the Service combatting racism (FRB), the University of Neuchatel in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism, the integration of office of canton Neuchatel (COSM) as well as the African Diaspora Council of Switzerland organised a seminar in Neuchatel where the results of the three studies were officially presented and analysed with the input of the public.
- Series of Events "Phase Out International Development Co-operation" organised by Forum for University and Society of the University of Bern
 - "Development paths in Africa and Asia" on 15/08/2018: A place is reserved for you.
 - «Africa, the West China» on 05/09/2018: A place is reserved for you.
 - «Critical assessment and a look into the future» on 19/09/2018: A place is reserved for you.

In the same spirit and pursuant to the theme "development", the AFMD and its partners are organising an exhibition of "Black Panthers of Switzerland". This expo seeks to render visible the contributions of the Black community in the Swiss cultural landscape and thereby contribute in improving the image of People of African Descent with a positive migration narrative, showcasing their outstanding talents and identity through arts. Painters and Artists of African Descent from Africa, Caribbean, Latin America, and North America living in Switzerland are welcome to participate. A couple of Swiss painters have also been invited in a collaborative effort towards co-habitation, integration and diversity to the exhibition. The exhibition is also in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well as objective 19 of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).

The exhibition will take place from **25th October till 4th of November 2018** at **Popup Dreieck Gallery in 3072 Ostermundigen** – Bern. The inauguration of the exhibition (vernissage) is scheduled on **Wednesday, 25th October 2018 by 18h00**

5. OUTCOMES

- ❖ Better awareness of talents and creations of people of African Descent in Switzerland
- ❖ Network of Black painters, stakeholders and actors promoting diversity strengthened
- ❖ Empowerment for the Black community and
- ❖ Enhanced dialogue and diversity in the society through inter-cultural exchange

7. ORGANISERS

African Foundation for Migration and Development (AFMD)
Peripherie Arts Galerie
Ajere African Heritage
In collaboration with Popup Dreieck Gallery in Ostermundigen

Contact:

Celeste Ugochukwu, lic.iur.
Executive Director,
African Foundation for Migration and Development, AFMD
Member, Eidg. Kommission gegen Rassismus
Tel: +41 79 476 74 83, +41 78 912 92 29 / diaspora(at)africanfoundation.ch