

Statement of Mario Joseph, managing director of the *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI)* on behalf of the BAI, *Mouvement de Liberté, d'Égalité des Haïtiens pour la Fraternité (MOLEGHAF)*; *Étude et action pour les droits de l'homme (EADH)*; *Sant Karl Levêque (SKL)*; and *Ensemble des Citoyens Compétents à la Recherche de l'Égalité des Droits de l'Homme en Haïti (ECCREDHH)*, all Haitian human rights and civil society organizations.

The statement was delivered to the Forum by Haitian-Canadian civil society activist **Frantz André**.

Statement

Madam President, I am speaking on behalf of Mr. Mario Joseph of the "Bureau des Avocats Internationaux en Haïti" (BAI), who was ultimately unable to attend this Forum due to the deeply discriminatory nature of global travel barriers and the acute insecurity in Haiti.

Haiti holds the key to reparations for all those harmed by slavery. But we Haitians need your help to reach the lock.

Haiti won against France on the battlefield in 1803 and proclaimed its independence in 1804. But the slaveholding powers, especially France, the United States, and the United Kingdom, refused to recognize us because the unjust world economic order built on slavery could not survive a successful Haiti.

In 1825, France sent warships and threatened to re-institute slavery if we did not pay for recognition. Haiti paid, but it cost us a century of economic, political, and human development.

By 2003, Haiti's democracy was strong enough to prepare a claim against France for the restitution of the \$21 billion it swindled from us through the independence debt.

France and the United States knew that Haitians winning their restitution claim would be the key that would open the door to reparations for our sisters and brothers in the Americas, in Europe, and in Africa. They knew that the still-unjust international economic order built on slavery could not survive a free Haiti committed to justice for all the people of Africa. So they kidnapped our elected president and overthrew our democracy to put an end to our demand for restitution.

Our restitution claim is still a key that could open the door to reparations for all of us. But we need your help. For 20 years now, the former slaveholding powers have kept our key from the door by preventing the election of a legitimate government that would pursue our claim. Haitians need you to urge your countries – in America, Europe and Africa – to support democracy in Haiti.

