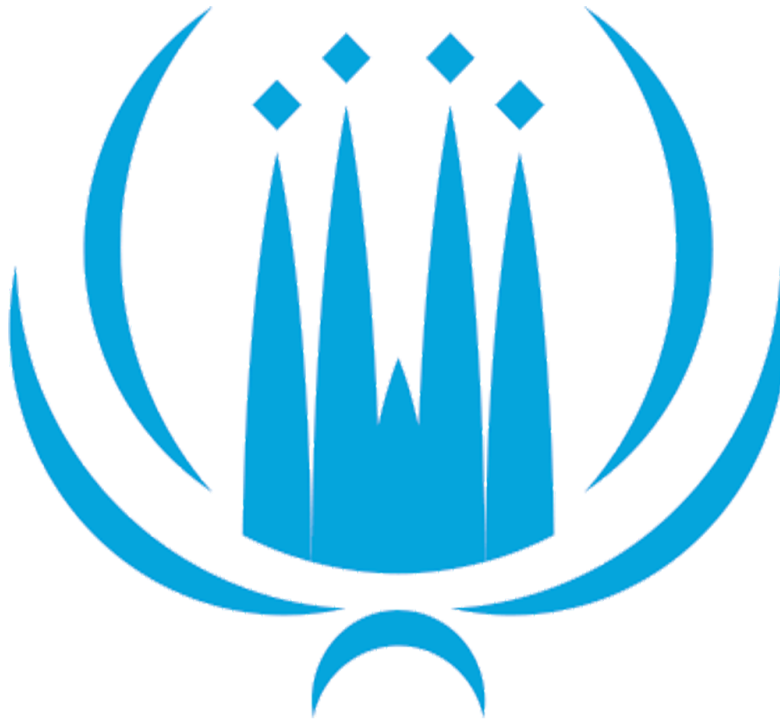




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BCNMUN 2026

From Crisis to Cooperation:
Navigating Instability in a Globalized World

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Topic: Establishing reparative economic measures for states structurally disadvantaged by colonial exploitation

Chair: Seth Anwar

Position: Expert Chair

Introduction

For more than five centuries, European colonial expansion reorganized the social systems of regions such as Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas, and parts of Asia, which fundamentally changed their political and economic states through exploitation of labor, land, and raw materials. However, these changes did not occur so uniformly, and in fact the divergence in outcomes is just as important as the disruptions caused initially. Economists studying these diverging outcomes have observed a pattern where European powers settled in large numbers and built lasting fundamental rights and a government with proper representation, such as the 13 colonies that became the United States. These colonies tended to prosper after independence, while colonies found with dense indigenous populations or resource-rich economies were governed through institutions that were built to transfer wealth to a larger capital rather than building toward local well-being. In settler colonies, colonizers intended to stay, and they did so by replicating the same rights and institutions they wanted for themselves. In extractive colonies, colonizers intended to leave with the resources, so they built the opposite: concentrated and convoluted institutions. This is a large part of why the United States retained, and also compounded its wealth after independence while a country such as Peru inherited an extractive state that post-independence powers frequently captured for their own benefit.

Understanding why these disadvantages persist today requires differentiation of the specific factors that contribute to each conflict, as delegates who treat colonial legacy as one singular cause will struggle to

write precise operative clauses. First, institutional quality and governance, meaning functional courts, low corruption, secure rights of property, and an accountable government, is generally considered the strongest single predictor of long-term growth. Second, sovereign debt and the resulting lack of financial flexibility, since debt that consumes a large share of government revenue leaves little room to invest in the institutional improvements needed to escape the trap in the first place. Third, trade dependence and unfavorable terms of trade, which leave export revenue vulnerable and out of the state's control. Fourth, infrastructure inherited from colonial-era transport and energy networks that were built for extraction rather than improving the state's infrastructure. Lastly, gaps in education and health that limit a workforce's ability to move into industries of higher value. No factor outshines the other, but it's important to note that they all reinforce one another rather than acting independently, which is why uni-lateral solutions have tended to lack meaningful results.

A number of concrete developmental measures already exist that delegates can use as starting points when drafting operative clauses. Debt relief programs, such as the IMF and World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and its initiative for multilateral debt relief, cancel a large share of a qualifying state's debt once it meets certain benchmarks on poverty-reduction spending and financial management.

Preferential trade access schemes, such as the European Union's Everything But Arms initiative and the United States' African Growth and Opportunity Act, grant qualifying low-income states tariff-free or reduced-tariff access to major markets for consumers so that exporters can move beyond raw extractions and into processed and manufactured goods, though both still remaining controlled by the granting power. Debt-for-development and debt-for-nature swaps, used recently by Ecuador to refinance debt in exchange for returning an equivalent amount in local currency to conservation and development programs, and to convert unpayable foreign debt into domestic investment. Revenue-transparency mechanisms, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, require participating governments and extractive companies to publicly disclose their payments and revenues from oil, gas, and mining, directly targeting corruption and further helping to turn resource wealth into development for the nation. None of these tools is a

solved problem, each with its own limitations that a stronger, reparations-specific framework should try and correct.

This distinction complicates any accounts of post-colonial economic weakness that blames colonizers alone. Political instability after independence undeniably damaged the economies of many former colonies, and that instability was not simply imposed from some external power after the country gained independence. However, it was rarely independent of the institutions colonialism left behind such as extractive colonial states, a government not held accountable, and higher powers accustomed to seizing resources rather than sharing them, as they were already structurally more prone to the downfall that followed. The colonial institutional legacy shaped how vulnerable a state was to instability post-independence, even as the specific instability itself was also a result of poor politics and harmful events. Much of the generational debt carried by former colonies today reflects this effect that compounds over time, rather than debt that was directly imposed by colonizers during the colonial era. Haiti provides one of the most prominent historical examples of colonial-era financial obligations. Following its independence post-1825, Haiti was not directly indebted by the colonizers, but rather by extensive borrowing starting in the 1960s carrying through the 1980s to finance industrialization and infrastructure. This debt later became unpayable when global interest rates spiked and raw commodity prices collapsed in the early 1980s, a crisis that fell hardest on states whose colonial-era economics relied heavily on raw material exports rather than a diversified industry.

These distinctions have their own direct implications in this committee's work. A state such as Ghana, whose colonial economy was built almost entirely around cocoa and gold extraction for British benefit and whose post-independence history includes repeated cycles tied to that same fragile institution. However, this situation sits differently in a state such as Mexico, which despite its own violent colonial history and periods of instability post-independence, industrialized substantially over the 20th century and is today an upper-middle-income member of the G20 with a large manufacturing hub integrated into North American supply chains. Delegates should therefore, resist from treating "formerly colonized" as a single category that matches to an identical reparative measure. Reparative economic measures that make

sense for a small, resource-dependent, low-income state may be poorly suited, or simply unnecessary, for a middle-income state whose trajectory post-colonialism turned out significantly different.

The implications of this debate are significant on several levels. Economically, structurally disadvantaged states continue to carry sovereign debt burdens that consume a large share of national budgets which heavily out-weigh investments in health, education, and public infrastructure. Legally, the question of whether or not states and private corporations should be held liable today for harms committed generations ago remains unsettled in international law, raising difficult questions about the reality of state succession and the enforcement of legal norms. Politically, the reparations movement has become a crucial point of agreement between African and Caribbean governments, as well as a controversy with the United States, much of Western Europe, and in a very different way, China, whose own role in the economies of the Global South has been examined deeply by relevant organizations and countries, thus lying as an extremely important example of just how important certain factors are in leading to instability within a nation. Delegates should treat this topic as both a matter of historical justice, and a question of development finance, debt sustainability, and global economic governance, one that requires distinguishing which states face genuine, ongoing structural disadvantage from states that do not.

Definition of Key Terms

Colonialism

The practice of a nation to establish control over foreign territories by populating them with settlers, exploiting their resources and labor, and imposing political, economic, and cultural dominance over the local population. These core components often create a one-sided dynamic between the colonizer, and the colony.

Reparative Economic Measures

A framework distinct from solely cash compensation that treats historical injustice as it requires a combination of legal accountability, financial and resource compensation, institutional reform, and a guarantee of non-repetition. Reparative measures is the term often preferred over “reparations” alone

because it emphasizes an ongoing process of taking accountability, and instituting complete structural repair rather than a mere single payment.

Structural Disadvantage

The impaired condition in which a state's economy is left in after being persistently constrained by harmful patterns established during colonial rule. These patterns include: heavy dependence on raw-commodity exports, underdeveloped domestic markets, weak tax capacity, and an infrastructure focused on extraction and export of natural resources for money rather than development. This condition varies substantially across former colonies and is not present, or not present to the same degree, in every state with a colonial background.

Colonial Debt

Sovereign debt imposed by the related colonial authority which includes environmental depletion (land debt), carbon footprint generated by industrialized nations (climate debt), and the related economic costs in which the successor state is responsible for (financial debt).

Restitution

The return of wrongfully taken property, most often cultural artifacts, human remains, or looted archives, to the community or state from which they were taken. Restitution is generally treated as a more specific and narrow reparation rather than a financial one, though the two are frequently pursued together.

Illicit Financial Flows

The illegal flow of money or capital from one country to another, frequently aligning in former colonies by making them manipulate internal prices of goods and services through multilateral extraction firms which drain domestic tax bases. IFFs work by diverting resources out of a local economy to reduce taxes and other foreign exchanges that governments rely heavily on to fund public infrastructure and reduce poverty.

Unequal Exchange

A persistent imbalance in international trade in which former colonies export low-value raw materials while importing higher-value manufactured or processed goods so that the gains from trade increase disproportionately to former colonial powers with larger industries and more resources. Beyond financial payments, reparations proposals increasingly link this concept to demands for fairer trade rules as well.

Background Information

Colonial Origins of Structural Disadvantage

The economic implications of structural disadvantage have 3 primary origins. The first is the transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly transported an estimated 12.5 million Africans across the Atlantic between the 15th and 19th centuries to forcibly work on plantations. This generated enormous wealth for empires in Europe and the Americas while simultaneously depopulating and destabilizing West and Central African societies. The second is the colonization of Africa and much of Asia following the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, at which European powers divided the continent of Africa amongst themselves, without the representation of any African country. This created borders that completely ignored existing political and ethnic communities, as well as imposed administrations that were designed to extract raw materials such as Congolese rubber by Belgium, African groundnuts by France, and Indian cotton and opium by Great Britain. The third is a set of financial frameworks that transferred wealth from colonized states to the ones colonizing, most of which happening even after formal independence. The most notable of these is the indemnity France demanded from Haiti after its independence in 1804 in exchange for diplomatic recognition. It required Haiti to borrow from French and American banks at the time with high interest, turning a large share of national income into crippling debt owed by Haiti toward these banks which lasted for over a century.

Furthermore, colonial administrations built public infrastructure, legal systems, and educational institutions that served extraction of raw materials and its exportation over essential developments. Railways ran from mines and plantations ran to ports instead of hubs that demanded these resources to

survive. Commercial law protected colonized land, and investment in local secondary and higher education was minimal, with the exception being a small administrative class. When independence movements succeeded across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean in the mid-20th century, most new states inherited these externally-dependent economies, along with debts imposed by colonial administrations. While all of this was happening, former colonial powers retained the same financial and manufacturing capacities as before.

In the decades since, a range of measures have been attempted to correct the imbalance these colonial-era origins created, including sovereign debt relief programs, trade access regulations, and revenue-transparency initiatives. These are examined in more depth in the sections on the debt crisis and previous attempts to solve the issue below. None of these methods have been proven to be sufficient on its own to fully offset the structural head start colonial-era extraction gave to the colonizing states.

Independence to the Debt Crisis

The initial decades after independence saw further structural damage rather than actual reparation. Newly independent governments in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia that frequently borrowed heavily from Western banks, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to finance development, often collapsed in the 1970s and 1980s when interest rates from these institutions spiked. This caused many of these nations to face sovereign debt crises. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank responded with several structural adjustment programs that required borrowing states to cut public spending, privatize state industries, and further adapt their economies toward exported goods. Critics argued that some conditions reinforced export dependence and constrained public spending, while supporters argued that they promoted fiscal stability. In several resource-rich states such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, this pattern of extraction has continued into the present through the global demand for essential minerals such as cobalt and coltan, two materials essential to the development and manufacturing of electronics and green-energy technology. This importance has led these materials to hold an increased

value when occurring outside the country of origin, making it an extremely high demand resource that countries desire for their economies. Chinese firms now own or finance roughly 15 of the DRC's 19 major cobalt-producing mines and control an estimated 80% of the country's cobalt output, which is shipped to China for refining. Additionally, researchers and the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that tens of thousands of children, some as young as six or seven years old, work in the artisanal mining sector that feeds this supply chain, all in a country where roughly three-quarters of the population lives below the international poverty line. Critics argue that the continued dependence on foreign companies and external markets for mineral resources can resemble some historical patterns of resource extraction, although contemporary commercial relationships differ from formal colonial rule

The Present Reparations Movement

Since roughly 2020, the reparations movement has accelerated rapidly due to several coinciding developments. The first of which is the 2024 Brussels Court of Appeal ruling that holds the state of Belgium liable for crimes committed against mixed-race "Métis" children during Belgium's colonial rule in the Congo. The second development is the long-running, but still unratified 2021 joint declaration between Germany and Namibia which addresses the 1904 to 1908 genocide of the Ovaherero and Nama peoples in Namibia. Lastly, is the sustained advocacy of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, chaired by Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, which has pursued its Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice dating back to 2013. Each of these separate efforts united on March 25, 2026, when the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution A/80/L.48. This resolution, sponsored by Ghana and backed by the African Union and CARICOM, declared the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialized chattel enslavement the gravest crime against humanity. This resolution passed with 123 votes in favor, 3 votes against (the United States, Israel, and Argentina), and 52 abstentions including the United Kingdom and many European Union member states. For further information on a country's stance regarding this topic,

it is important to check (if a member of the General Assembly) the country's voting status on this resolution.

This resolution helped set the stage for the High-Level Consultative Conference on Reparations hosted by Ghana in June 2026, in which African and Caribbean heads of state adopted a nineteen-point global framework, calling for formal apologies, a Global Reparations Fund, debt relief, reimbursement of cultural artifacts and human remains, and reform of national financial institutions. These advancements merged the previously separate African Union and CARICOM reparations agendas into a single document ready for presentation to the UN General Assembly. In early July 2026, Heads of Government for CARICOM formally approved a revised Ten-point plan titled, "A Manifesto for the Coming Enlightenment," and the CARICOM Reparations Commission traveled to the United Kingdom in mid-July 2026 to present the case directly with Parliament. However, even as momentum builds in this movement, the response from most former colonial powers and from the United States has ranged vastly, often resulting in a mere partial, but cautious acknowledgement such as the one from Germany and Namibia, as well as France, to outright rejection of financial and legal liability.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Republic of Ghana

Ghana has positioned itself as the diplomatic leader for Africa in the current reparations movement. President John Dramani Mahama sponsored UN General Assembly Resolution A/80/L.48 and hosted the June 2026 Accra conference that produced the nineteen-point reparatory justice framework, framing Ghana's top role in the movement, following its historic feat as the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence, and a center of Pan-Africanist politics. Ghana's advocacy links reparations explicitly to structural economic reform, including debt relief and reform of global financial governance. Due to this, Ghana fails to make reparations of other forms an equal priority for the movement.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Barbados

Caricom, a bloc of twenty Caribbean states, has pursued reparations longer and more formally than any other regional body through its Reparations Commission, an organization established in 2013 under the Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice. Barbados, under Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley, has been especially voicing their opinion, and Barbadian scholar Professor Sir Hilary Beckles chairs the CARICOM Reparations Commission. In July 2026, CARICOM Heads of Government approved a revised Ten-Point Plan emphasizing cash compensation, debt relief, technology transfer, and climate justice as crucial points of repair. The Caribbean's vulnerability to climate change deeply weakens the region's economic stability. This vulnerability is something that CARICOM itself links directly to the plantation economics imposed on the region as a result of colonialism, and its impairment caused by the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The United Kingdom is amongst the states most frequently named in demands for reparations due to its central role in the transatlantic slave trade and its administration of colonies across Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. The UK government has expressed regret for its cruel role in colonialism, but continues to decline the issuing of a formal apology, or to commit to financial reparations, as reflected on their abstention on UN Resolution A/80/L.48. The U.K. nonetheless remains a central target of advocacy, as shown by the CARICOM Reparations Commission's July 2026 mission to the UK Parliament, which was organized in partnership with the All-Party Parliamentary Group of Afrikan Reparations.

Federal Republic of Germany

Germany is the blueprint of a formal colonial power that has partially engaged with reparations, through its 2021 recognition of the 1904-1908 killing of the Ovaherero and Nama peoples in present-day Namibia as genocide and its agreement to provide roughly €1.1 billion in development funding over thirty years. However, critics believe that Germany avoided the word "reparations" in this agreement, instead describing the funds as "reconstruction" or "assistance". This distinction Namibian government and

traditional officials, as well as international human rights organizations, continue to reject due to a lack of adequate participation by the affected parties.

Kingdom of Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo

Belgium's colonial rule over the Congo, first as the personal property of King Leopold II from 1885 to 1908 and then as a Belgian state colony until 1960, Belgian colonial rule involved extensive documented abuses, including forced labor, violence, and exploitation. The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains one of the states most structurally disadvantaged by colonial exploitation. The main reason is due to the country's vast reserves of cobalt and coltan, both of which are essential to electronics and clean-energy supply chains. Despite adequate access to these resources, Congo still remains amongst the poorest states in the world, a pattern linked to the persistence of private resource governance which was firstly established under colonial rule. Belgium has taken some concrete steps toward reparation, including a December 2024 Brussels Court of Appeal ruling holding the Belgian state liable for crimes committed against Métis children during colonial rule, and an ongoing program to return looted cultural artifacts. However, Belgium has not issued a formal state apology or committed to financial reparations to the DRC itself.

African Union

The African Union, representing fifty-five member states, has increasingly coordinated its member states' reparations advocacy with that of CARICOM, merging its own reparations agenda with the Caribbean bloc's at the June 2026 Accra conference. The AU has emphasized restitution of natural resources and reform of financial institutions both national and international, alongside historical compensation, especially reflecting the interests of resource-rich but financially poor member states. Additionally, alongside CARICOM, an Advisory Panel on Reparatory Justice, an Expert Panel on Restitution of Cultural Artifacts, and a Legal Panel for Reparatory Justice has been developed to move the movement forward.

People's Republic of China

China does not fit the colonizer/colonized description this committee otherwise applies, but delegates should treat it as a key actor in the structural disadvantage this committee is examining because it is now the largest single bilateral creditor to many of the same states seeking reparations, some critics argue that certain practices contribute to patterns of resource dependence resembling aspects of historical extraction, while others reject comparisons between contemporary Chinese economic activity and colonialism. Since launching the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, China has disbursed more than a trillion dollars in loans to over 150 countries, and developing countries now owe a record amount of nearly 35 billion dollars as debt repayments to China in 2025 alone. In Ecuador, China became the largest external creditor over the 2010s through loans backed by oil that pushed the country's debt owed to China to nearly 39% of their GDP, with repayment structured through deliveries of crude oil priced at extremely low rates. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chinese firms control an estimated 80% of cobalt output through ownership or financing of most of the country's major mines, a sector that the U.S. Department of Labor has linked child and forced labor in the artisanal mining that feeds Chinese-owned factories.

A central criticism of Chinese overseas lending concerns transparency and accountability. In the United States and the European Union, independent journalists, competing companies, labor unions, and non-governmental organizations operate largely without state control, meaning that abuses such as Western apparel companies using child labor in a supplier factory, are frequently investigated and exposed by outlets and watchdogs with no obligation to protect the company or the state. This accountability system however, is imperfect and enforced unevenly. China's press and most of its major companies operate under a different structure, as China was ranked 178th out of 180 countries in its 2026 World Press Freedom Index, behind all but North Korea and Eritrea, and reported that China holds more journalists in detention than any other country in the world. Loan agreements under the Belt and Road Initiative have also frequently included confidentiality clauses that are not disclosed to the public, or in some cases, to the borrowing country's own legislature. It should be noted that some scholars dispute the strongest version of the debt-trap diplomacy narrative, arguing that borrowing governments keep more

negotiating power than is often assumed, and that Chinese loan terms are not necessarily harsher than commercial alternatives. Delegates representing China or sympathetic states should be prepared to make this counter-argument. Even so, the absence of dispute over how these deals are negotiated and enforced remains a structural difference between state lending linked to China, and state lending from states with free press and a civilly independent society, and any reparative economic framework this committee designs should consider whether transparency and disclosure obligations should extend to all major creditors of the Global South, not only the historical European colonial powers.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1804-1825	Haiti's Independence Debt Following the Haitian Revolution and declaration of independence in 1804, France refused to give Haiti sovereign recognition until 1825, when it demanded restitution in what is now equivalent to billions of dollars in today's money. Additionally, Haiti borrows from French and American banks at high interest to pay this debt, diverting national income away from development for over a century.
1884-1885	Berlin Conference and the Partition of Africa European powers meet in Berlin to formalize claims to African territory without the participation of African States, establishing the colonial borders and extractive powers that would define the continent's economics for the following century. King Leopold II of Belgium secures personal control over the Congo Free State at this conference.
1904-1908	Herero and Nama Genocide German Colonial forces in present-day Namibia carry out a campaign of killing against the Ovaherero and Nama peoples following their uprising which caused colonial land seizures, killing an estimated 80% of the Ovaherero and half of the Nama population through massacre, starvation, and forced labor in concentration camps. This period is widely recognized by historians as the first genocide of the 20th century.

June 30, 1960

Congolese Independence

The Democratic Republic of Congo gained independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960 with Patrice Lumumba as prime minister.

January 1961

Assassination of Patrice Lumumba

Within months of independence, Lumumba was deposed amidst a crisis involving Congolese political factions and foreign powers, including Belgium and the United States, with control over Congolese resources forming part of the broader geopolitical context. This event remains central to Congolese demands for Belgian accountability.

2001

World Conference Against Racism and the Durban Declaration

The UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa produces the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which for the first time secures international recognition that the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism were grave violations of human rights. Western powers resisted language that would have required reparations from them.

2013

Launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative

China launches the Belt and Road Initiative, an infrastructure lending program that has since disbursed more than one trillion dollars to over 150 countries. While the initiative has financed ports, railways, and power plants across the Global South, it has drawn criticism for its lack of transparency relative to Western lenders and for resource-backed loan structures, such as those used in Ecuador and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that critics argue reproduce colonial-style extraction under a new creditor.

2013

CARICOM Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice

CARICOM Heads of Government establish the CARICOM Reparations Commission and adopt the original Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice, demanding a full formal apology, debt cancellation, and development programs from European states involved in the transatlantic slave trade. This reparations framework quickly became the most developed one prior to 2026.

May 28, 2021

Germany-Namibia Joint Declaration

Germany formally apologizes and recognizes the 1904-1908 killings as genocide, and agrees to provide approximately €1.1 billion in development funding over thirty years, deliberately

avoiding the term “Reparations.” The declaration is criticized however by Ovaherero and Nama traditional authorities for having been negotiated without their direct participation and thus, remains unratified by the Namibian National Assembly.

December 2, 2024

Brussels Court of Appeal Ruling

The Brussels Court of Appeal convicts the Belgian state of crimes against humanity for its policy during colonialism of forcibly removing mixed-race “Métis” children from their families in the Congo between 1948 and 1962. They did this by providing compensation to plaintiffs and bringing up further claims by an estimate of 1,500 affected individuals.

March 25, 2026

UN General Assembly Resolution A/80/L.48

The General Assembly adopts a Ghana-sponsored resolution declaring the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans to be the gravest crime against humanity. By a vote of 123 in favor, 3 against (the United States, Israel, and Argentina), and 52 abstentions, the non-binding resolution requests a Secretary-General report on implementation at the General Assembly’s 82nd session.

June 19-20, 2026

Accra High-Level Consultative Conference on Reparations

African and Caribbean heads of state meet in Accra, Ghana, merging the African Union’s and CARICOM’s separate reparation agendas into a single nineteen-point global framework calling for formal apologies, a Global Reparations Fund, debt relief, restitution of cultural property, and reform of international financial institutions, all to be presented at the next UN General Assembly session.

July 5-8, 2026

Approval of Revised CARICOM Ten-Point Plan

CARICOM Heads of Government, meeting in Saint Lucia for their 51st Regular Meeting, approve the Revised CARICOM Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice named, “A Manifesto for the Coming Enlightenment.” This framework strengthened the bloc’s legal arguments and added emphasis on the profound impact of enslavement on women and girls and on the link between reparations and climate justice.

July 13-16, 2026

CARICOM Reparations Commission Mission to the United Kingdom

The CARICOM Reparations Commission travels to the United Kingdom to present its case directly with diplomats and Parliament,

including a presentation organized by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Afrikan Reparations, as part of preparations for the November 2026 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Antigua and Barbuda.

Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions

Resolution A/80/L.48 - March 25, 2026

This is the key driver for the current state of diplomacy. Sponsored by Ghana and backed by the African Union and CARICOM, it declares the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans among the gravest crimes against humanity, affirms the importance of addressing historical wrongs in a manner that promotes justice, and states that claims for reparations are a concrete step toward success. However, this Resolution is not legally binding and does not itself establish any financial mechanism and it awaits the Secretary-General to report on further implementation steps taken by member states, giving the reparations movement a formal, recurring place on the General Assembly's agenda.

Durban Declaration and Programme of Action - 2001

Adopted at the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, this declaration was the first major UN document to formally recognize that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade were appalling tragedies and among the major sources of racism, as well as how colonialism led to racial discrimination. Additionally, Western powers successfully avoided language that was explicit to reparations and several states, including the United States and Israel, and several walked out during the conference over unrelated disputes concerning the Middle East, which limited the declaration's practical impact, but still established important normative language later cited by the 2026 UN Resolution.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - 2007

Though not specific to colonial reparations, this declaration establishes the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decisions affecting them through the right of representation of their own choosing, a

provision cited by UN treaty bodies and human rights organizations in criticizing the exclusion of Ovaherero and Nama traditional authorities from the 2021 Germany-Namibia negotiations. This is a declaration delegates should consider when designing participatory mechanisms for any reparatory framework.

General Assembly Resolution 68/137 - 2013: International Decade for People of African Descent

This resolution proclaimed 2015-2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent, under the theme of recognition, justice, and development. It called upon member states to adopt effective measures to combat the structural discrimination and economic marginalization people of African descent face worldwide. It provided an institutional foundation and platform backed by the UN to help sustain the foundation in which later, was used to build support for Resolution A/80/L.48.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Prior efforts to address colonial-era structural disadvantage have been extensive, but largely lacked size, rigor, or focused more on unilateral frameworks, leading them to be vague. Now, this is what this committee is tasked with designing. The Netherlands issued a formal apology in 2022 for its role in slavery, and France recognized slavery as a crime against humanity in 2001, but neither state has committed to financial compensation. Germany's 2021 joint declaration with Namibia offered substantial development funding but explicitly avoided the legal and moral implications of the term "reparations," and remains unratified years later due to the exclusion of Ovaherero and Nama representatives from negotiations. Belgium's Special Parliamentary Commission on the Colonial Past, established in 2020, produced a detailed report recommending financial reparations and restitution. However, its recommendations have not been formally adopted by the Belgian government, and no state apology to the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been issued. Even individual court rulings such as the 2024 Brussels Métic case, have begun to establish narrower forms of legal liability that Belgium fails to deepen.

More general financial tools have also fallen short of addressing colonial-era structural disadvantages. Debt relief initiatives such as the IMF and World Bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries program have reduced some debt burdens, but were designed around general debt sustainability rather than any recognition of the colonial or exploitative origins of the debt itself. Structural adjustment conditions historically attached to such relief have, according to many economists, reinforced rather than dismantled export-dependent colonial-era economic structures, while others argue that they promoted economic and fiscal stability. China's Belt and Road Initiative has been promoted by Beijing as an alternative development-finance model free of the political conditions attached to Western and multilateral lending, but, as discussed in the Major Countries and Organisations Involved section, it has drawn its own criticism for opacity and resource-backed lending structures that many argue reproduce rather than resolve colonial-style extraction. Due to the mandate of this committee to focus primarily on forward-looking solutions, delegates should treat this history as a set of lessons. Partial, unilateral, and non-consultative measures have consistently drawn criticism for being inadequate, and repeat patterns from past frameworks. Therefore, this underlines the exact need for coordinated and properly structured solutions.

Possible Solutions

Financial Mechanisms

Firstly, a Global Reparations Fund, as proposed at the June 2026 Accra conference. This would be possible by pooling contributions from former colonial powers administered jointly with recipient states rather than singular nations. Secondly, the application of the odious debt doctrine to cancel sovereign debt that can be traced to colonial-era borrowing, such as Haiti's post-1825 indemnity debt. This could potentially be administered through independent claims similar to those used in other historical reparation contexts. Thirdly, a reform of IMF and World Bank voting-share and governance structures to give greater representation to African, Caribbean, and other structurally disadvantaged states. Alongside this method would require a review of remaining structural-adjustment-style lending conditions that would prevent

export-dependent economies. Lastly, preferential trade terms and technology-transfer requirements attached to reparative agreements. This would address the underlying terms-of-trade imbalance rather than treating reparations as a one-time payment that is completely separate from ongoing economic tensions.

Legal and Institutional Mechanisms

Requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal status of reparations claims for colonial-era crimes would help build on precedents such as the ICJ's rulings on Uganda's resource exploitation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Building off that idea, establishing joint legal and advisory panels is crucial to ensure legitimacy on both ends and should include panels dedicated to reparatory justice, cultural restitution, and legal strategy with balanced representation.

Restitution and Cultural Measures

A systematic restitution of looted cultural artifacts and human remains, following the models of Belgium returning Congolese objects and Germany returning Herero and Nama remains, is essential to not undermine a nation's identity and culture. This should also include dedicated funding for provenance research, and for museums and archives in recipient states to preserve and display original, returned items. Above all, formal, unconditional state apologies that acknowledge not just moral, but legal responsibility is needed to maintain state sovereignty and dignity, and should not address recurring criticism that gestures such as Germany's "regret" language in Namibia and Belgium's royal statements of regret in the Congo, as they fell short of the legal acknowledgement that states argue is a required component for genuine reparations.

Participatory Safeguards

Making sure participation of the affected communities is direct, is mandatory. This includes indigenous groups and traditional authorities in the negotiation of any reparations agreement and shouldn't mirror the Germany-Namibia process, where the exclusion of Ovaherero and Nama traditional leaders was excluded, which is one of the main reasons why the agreement remains unratified. Finally, a gender-responsive

design is absolutely necessary as it reflects the CARICOM Reparations Commission's 2026 emphasis on the disproportionate impact of enslavement on women and girls. This ensures reparative funds specifically address maternal health, education, and economic empowerment programs for women in the affected states.

Points of Contention Delegates Should Address

Delegates representing former colonial powers and states that question particular reparations proposals, including the United States, have raised several objections that any resolution should engage with rather than ignore. This includes the difficulty of quantifying harm across generations, concerns about legality and liability, questions about which modern individuals or institutions bear responsibility for these acts, and arguments that existing foreign aid already forms a substantial transfer of resources. Delegates representing China are likely to raise a parallel but distinct objection, arguing that it should not be treated in the same manner as European states that exercised formal colonial rule over territories in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America." This is a legitimate distinction for delegates to debate, separate from the question of whether transparency standards should nonetheless apply to all major creditors moving forward. A credible ECOFIN resolution will need to propose fair, evidence-based methodologies for calculating reparative measures, reasonable timelines, and mechanisms similar to the joint fund model that can build political buy-in from contributing states.

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