Thank you to the Chairs and the honourable hosts,

Distinguished guests, Members of the European Parliament

As a Board member of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), I welcome the occasion of the First Inaugural People of African Descent Week in the European Parliament.

We dedicate this week to the Black experience in Europe, on two sides of the coin. On one side, we are here to celebrate the unrecognized contributions of black people in Europe, now and throughout history.

One the other side, we need to highlight the racism, discrimination and violence experienced by Black people in Europe.

We all recall the devastating images of the enslavement, inhumane conditions, beatings, rape and starvation of black migrants passing through Libya. Despite these devastating human rights abuses, the EU has taken no strong action to protect the rights of Black people. We are forced therefore to the conclusion that the EU and its Member States value Black lives less than upholding their borders.
I speak today from the European Network Against Racism, the only pan-European network of NGOs working to combat racism through advocacy and cross-community action. ENAR and its members have led calls for a cohesive, European-wide policy response to Afrophobia and structural racism against People of African descent in Europe.

What do I mean “Afrophobia” and “structural racism”? As we will hear in the various topical hearings of the PAD Week, and documented in ENAR’s Shadow Report on Afrophobia, these terms refer to the experience of violence, abuse, and discrimination, in all areas of public life for Black people.

The term Afrophobia covers both (a) direct forms of racism: such as physical violence, hate speech, and discriminatory encounters with the criminal justice and immigration systems,

(b) But also the structural racism which is the extreme disadvantages in the fields of employment, education, healthcare, housing, and beyond.

There are 15 million people of African descent and Black Europeans in Europe. But according to the EU MIDIS II survey, in the last 5 years, 39% of PAD in Europe experienced discrimination.

This situation has remained largely unaddressed at European or national level – there is still no single cohesive policy in the EU to combat Afrophobia.
We as ENAR have tried to document the phenomenon of Afrophobia. I would like to outline three next steps to be taken to advance the equal inclusion of Black people in Europe:

The first - **we must recognise the past before we can move forward.** Full recognition of Europe’s history of colonialism and enslavement, and its impact on black people, is a necessary step toward equality and inclusion. Akin to various attempts to commemorate past injustices with museums, formal days and concrete inroads toward restitution and reparations, the EU should hold a European Day to Recognise the ongoing impact of Colonialism and Enslavement, or a European Black History Month.

Second – The vital work done by Black policymakers and civil society must be supported. European Union institutions must ensure accessible and sustainable funding for grassroots organisations working to combat Afrophobia, and work to improve representation of people of African descent in politics.

Third – just as we recognise that the effect of racism is structural, let us understand that the solution must be structural also. We need **EU-wide, cohesive policy responses to the racism and exclusion experienced by Black people.** For this we need improved equality data, and the work outlined from the UK Race Disparity Audit is an example to be emulated across Europe.

ENAR and its member organisations call on the **EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, to adopt an EU Framework for the Inclusion of People of African Descent in Europe.** This should call on national governments in the EU to adopt concrete, measured
policies in the fields of employment, education, criminal justice, healthcare, and housing to counter the full extent of racism and discrimination against Black people.

This house has a responsibility to ensure a concrete follow up from this event. We call on the European Parliament to adopt a Resolution on the fundamental rights of People of African Descent in Europe, and set this Framework in motion.

We look forward to this vital recognition, and commend the work of all the esteemed policymakers, researchers and activists in this room in moving forward in unity.

Thank you for your attention.