



# THE RETURN TO AFRICA



**PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMME**

The 2nd Africa and African Diaspora (AAD) Conference is scheduled to be hosted in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Conference is a follow-up Conference to the first one which was held virtually in October 2021.

## Key Information

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**Conference dates:** Monday 26 to Friday 30 October 2026

**Venue and accommodation:** Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa

**Official website:** [aadconference.africa](http://aadconference.africa)

**Registration:** <https://aadconference.africa/packages/>

**Contact email:** [admin@africa-africandiaspora.org](mailto:admin@africa-africandiaspora.org)

## A Historic and Strategic Moment for the Conference

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Although progress was being made in the last few decades to reverse the legacy of the periods of slavery and colonisation, the turn of events in the last few years shows a new determination to push back on any progress made. This pushback is characterised by an upsurge of extreme right-wing politics, and a clear racist intent to reinstate Europe and the USA as imperial powers against all the people of the Global South, against people of African descent, and indigenous peoples globally.

These developments have made this year's Africa and African Diaspora (AAD) Conference more strategic and timely to collectively take a stand and develop strategies to resist this new onslaught.

Besides, there are tailwinds of historical developments which make this moment very critical. These include the March 25th UN resolution declaring trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialised chattel enslavement the gravest crime against humanity; the recent 5th UN Permanent Forum on the People of African Descent; the May 2025 Berlin Conference; and the upcoming Unity moment of African Peoples in Ethiopia in April next year, among others.

There is also progress being made in dealing with the matter of reparatory justice arising from the many centuries of slavery and colonisation. Encouraging developments are the awakening and reawakening of faith communities like the Vatican, the Church of Scotland, and the Anglican Church, and academic institutions like Georgetown University, Princeton Theological Seminary and other institutions, to injuries put upon African peoples over centuries.

All this and other developments globally make this Conference strategically timely.

The Conference will take into consideration the work and outcomes of all the Pan-African Congresses and Conferences since the first 1900 Conference to date.

## Three Elements Relating To The Conference

The Conference has Pre-Conference activities and the actual Programme of the Conference. The Pre-Conference activities consist of a ‘Pilgrimage of Return’ to Africa, an Exposure Programme in Johannesburg, and a Women’s Pre-Conference meeting. The second part deals with the developing Programme of the Conference.

01	<b>Pilgrimage of Return to Africa</b> 23 – 25 October 2026
02	<b>Exposure Programme in Johannesburg</b> 25 October 2026
03	<b>Women’s Pre-Conference Meeting</b> 26 October 2026

## The Pilgrimage Of Return To Africa (23 to 25 October 2026)

Arrangements are being made for delegates to the Conference coming from the Diaspora to enter the African continent through the “Doors of No Return” — the doors through which Africans were taken into slavery. The idea is to turn these historical “Doors of No Return” into “The Doors of Return” back to the African continent, as delegates come from the Diaspora to the Conference.

### The identified Doors of Return for Diaspora delegates are the following:

- Angola: Morro da Cruz, Luanda
- Ghana: Cape Coast
- Mozambique: Maputo Bay, Maputo
- Nigeria: Calabar, Bonny, Badagry and Lagos
- Senegal: Goree Island, Dakar
- South Africa: Table Bay, Cape Town; Port Natal, KZN; and Simon’s Town, Cape Town

A “Pilgrimage of Return” team will focus solely on this programme, scheduled for the weekend of 23 to 25 October 2026. Their Terms of Reference are to interact with all the countries affected (governments, heritage institutions, civil society, religious organisations, etc.) to ensure that:

- Delegates are received and accommodated accordingly;
- Arrangements are made for reception events and a tour of historical heritage sites related to slavery; and
- Delegates are sent off to South Africa for the Conference.

Once the plans on these “Doors of Return” are finalised, the information will be shared with all those who intend to be at the Conference.

Diaspora Delegates who choose to go through this experience will cover their own travel costs (flight tickets from their home airports via the “Doors of Return” to Johannesburg, and back home). Host organisations are expected to offer hospitality in their countries for the guests as far as they are able to.

## **Exposure Programme In Johannesburg (25 October 2026)**

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An Exposure Programme for those who choose to go straight to Johannesburg will be arranged for Sunday, 25 October 2026.

- The morning will be open for those who choose to go to Church. A team will be available to advise in this regard.
- The Exposure Programme will start at 13h00 with snacks at the popular Vilakazi Street precinct in Soweto, where the historical Mandela and Tutu houses are located. The tour will start at the Mandela and Tutu houses and proceed to the Hector Pieterse Museum, the Apartheid Museum, and end at the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Legacy Centre.
- Those who choose to go to Church in the morning will join the group at Vilakazi Street.

## **Women’s Pre-Conference Meeting (26 October 2026)**

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Arrangements are being made to hold a Women’s Pre-Conference meeting on 26 October 2026 (09h00–17h00). A Planning and Host Committee for this meeting has been constituted to take full responsibility for the meeting.

## **Arrivals For The Conference**

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Those attending the Women’s Pre-Conference meeting are advised to arrive by the evening of Sunday, 25 October at the latest.

All other delegates are expected to be in Johannesburg by Monday, 26 October 2026.

## Proposed Programme For The Conference

### Formal Reception for Delegates

A Formal Reception for all Delegates and special guests will be held on the evening of Monday, 26 October, from 19h00–21h00 at the Birchwood Conference Centre.

### TUESDAY, 27 OCTOBER

TIME	PROGRAMME
<b>09h00–10h30</b>	<b>Official Opening Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Introductory statements by the Co-Convenors of the Conference (Rev. Dr Angelique Walker-Smith and Rev. Frank Chikane)</li> <li>– Short video: Africa before slavery and colonisation; 500 years of slavery, racism and colonisation; the legacy of slavery, racism, colonisation and neocolonialism; current efforts to end this legacy</li> <li>– Official Opening Address by the President of the Republic of South Africa (TBC)</li> <li>– Messages/statements by multilateral and international organisations</li> </ul>
<b>10h30–11h00</b>	Break
<b>11h00–12h30</b>	<b>Keynote Speakers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– His Excellency Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa</li> <li>– Prime Minister or Ministers of one of the Caribbean countries, and/or one former President</li> </ul>
<b>12h30–14h00</b>	Lunch Break
<b>14h00–15h00</b>	Messages/statements by multilateral and international organisations
<b>15h00–15h30</b>	Address by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches
<b>15h30–16h00</b>	Break
<b>16h00–17h00</b>	Panel inputs on Pan-African Congresses/Conferences since 1900, and on developments since the first AAD Conference in 2021
<b>17h00–18h00</b>	Regional developments & reports (Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America, Oceania)
<b>18h00</b>	Break
<b>19h00</b>	Regional breakouts

**WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROGRAMME</b>
<b>09h00–10h00</b>	Keynote Address on Haiti, the first Black Republic — challenges and lessons to be learned: His Excellency Rev. Prof. Dr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former President of Haiti Keynote address by one Minister of Racial Equality from Brazil
<b>10h00–12h30</b>	<b>Parallel sessions with key speakers and panels of speakers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Decoloniality and the return of imperial and colonial world views</li> <li>– Culture, identity, and liberating forms of spirituality</li> <li>– Racism, gender justice and human rights</li> <li>– The 4th Industrial Revolution, Artificial Intelligence, and the economic advancement of Africans and people of African descent to end racism</li> <li>– Economic justice &amp; business collaboration between Africans and people of African descent</li> <li>– Climate change and climate justice</li> </ul>
<b>12h30–14h00</b>	Luncheon hosted by Dr. Barbara Reynolds, UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent
<b>14h00–15h00</b>	Keynote speakers on reparatory justice (Diaspora and Africa)
<b>15h00–16h00</b>	Panel discussion on reparations (Caribbean, Africa, North America, Latin America, Asia & Europe)
<b>16h00–18h00</b>	Panel on youth perspectives & the future (representing all regions globally)
<b>19h00</b>	Break
<b>19h00–21h00</b>	An evening on the future of Africa (the next 20 to 50 years)

**THURSDAY, 29 OCTOBER**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROGRAMME</b>
<b>09h00–10h30</b>	State of Indigenous Peoples globally, and genocide — panel of speakers: Indigenous, Palestine, Dalit
<b>10h30–11h00</b>	Break
<b>11h00–12h30</b>	Mobilisation of Africans, people of African descent, and Indigenous Peoples to establish a just world order — panel discussions (Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America, Oceania)
<b>12h30–14h00</b>	Lunch break with regional breakouts / luncheon hosted by AU 6th Region
<b>14h00–17h30</b>	Plenary reports

<b>17h45–20h30</b>	Regional leadership with Executive Team prepare final draft Conference Declaration and Plans of Action
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**FRIDAY, 30 OCTOBER**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROGRAMME</b>
<b>09h00–10h30</b>	<b>Closing business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Action plans</li><li>– The way forward and mechanism to take the AAD into the future</li><li>– Conference Declaration</li></ul>
<b>10h30–11h00</b>	Break
<b>11h00–12h30</b>	<b>Closing Ceremony</b>
<b>12h30</b>	Departures