

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 11.1.9
Halifax Regional Council
July 21, 2020

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 14, 2020

SUBJECT: Official Recognition and Proclamation of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024

ORIGIN

On July 7, 2020, following a presentation by Senator Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard regarding anti-Black racism in the HRM, Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer, indicated that staff will bring forward a resolution at the next meeting of Halifax Regional Council for HRM to sign on to the International Decade for People of African Descent.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter ("HRM Charter"), subsections 58(1) (2):

58 (1) The Council shall make decisions in the exercise of its powers and duties by resolution, by policy or by by-law.

(2) The Council may exercise any of its powers and duties by resolution unless a policy or a by-law is required by an enactment.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. authorize the Mayor, on Regional Council's behalf, to proclaim the years 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent and sign the proclamation set out in Attachment 1 to this report; and,
2. direct the CAO to develop an anti-Black racism action plan in support of the Proclamation and return to Regional Council for its endorsement.

BACKGROUND

The United Nations (UN) regularly designates specific days, weeks, years and decades to draw attention to key issues and promote, through awareness and action, its objectives. These observances are typically established with resolutions through the UN General Assembly¹. In December 2013, the UN adopted resolution 68/237 to proclaim the “**International Decade for People of African Descent (the Decade), commencing on 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2024, with the theme “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development”**”. This resolution was formally proclaimed on December 10, 2014, during the 69th session of the General Assembly.

The Decade aims to strengthen actions and measures to ensure the full realization of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in society. By leveraging the theme “Recognition, Justice and Development”, the Decade will also provide an operational framework to encourage societies to eradicate social injustices inherited from history and to fight against racism, prejudice and racial discrimination to which people of African descent are still subjected.

The operation framework of the Decade will accomplish the following objectives:

- Promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent, as recognized in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#);
- Promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;
- Adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks according to the [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#) and the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) and to ensure their full and effective implementation.

DISCUSSION

Since the official proclamation of the Decade almost five year ago, several jurisdictions and organizations have officially proclaimed and adopted the Decade. These include:

- The Federal Government – January 2018
- Province of Nova Scotia – May 2018
- City of Toronto – April 2019
- City of Ottawa – March 2018
- Dalhousie University – October 2018

While the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has referenced the Decade in its annual African Heritage Month Proclamations since 2016, it is yet to officially recognize, proclaim and adopt it. Although the Decade is entering into its fifth year, it is not too late to formally endorse it. In fact, in light of the events of the last two months around Anti-Black Racism and Black Lives Matter, we are at a critical time in our relationship with the African Nova Scotian community, and it would be a missed opportunity to ignore an invitation to join other municipalities that have officially recognized the Decade and are working on actions around its themes.

¹ See more about UN observances - <https://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/united-nations-observances/>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Budget implications are undetermined at this time.

RISK CONSIDERATION

N/A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

N/A

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

ALTERNATIVES

The Regional Council may decide not to issue the Proclamation which is not advisable.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Proclamation, United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, 902.490.3677

Report Approved by: Original Signed
Caroline Blair-Smith, Director, Human Resources/Office of Diversity & Inclusion, 902.490.7239

Financial Approval by: Original Signed
Jane Fraser, Director of Finance, Asset Management and ICT/CFO, 902.490.4630

Proclamation

International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024

WHEREAS the Halifax Regional Municipality is aware of the United Nations General Assembly Proclamation of 2015 to 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (the Decade) in its Resolution 68/237 of December 23, 2014; and

AND WHEREAS the Resolution designates people of African descent as a distinct group, whose human rights must be promoted and protected, and stipulates as the theme for the said Decade, “People of African descent: Recognition, justice and development”;

AND WHEREAS, the Decade was officially recognized by Canada Government (January 30, 2018) and the Province Nova Scotia (May 8, 2018);

AND WHEREAS the Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to removing barriers that prevent full participation of our residents, businesses, visitors, and municipal employees in municipal programs and services;

AND WHEREAS International Decade for People of African Descent is an opportunity to champion the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, Mayor Mike Savage, on behalf of Halifax Regional Council, do hereby proclaim years 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent and enjoin all residents of our Municipality to take actions that will support the full inclusion of our African descent communities in all areas of our society.

Dated at Halifax, Nova Scotia

this 21st day of July 2020