Feedback to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination(CERD) on the first draft of a General Recommendation on reparations for the transatlantic trade in African for chattel slavery and the ensuing and continuing harms inflicted on people of African descent

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The transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery were complex systems that involved various European powers, African kingdoms, and the Americas. Here's a brief overview

- Early involvement (1400s): The Portuguese, with the support of the Catholic Church, began exploring West Africa and establishing trade relationships with African kingdoms. They started purchasing enslaved people from African leaders and transporting them to Europe and the Atlantic islands.

- Papal bulls (1452-1493): Several papal bulls, including "Dum Diversas" (1452) and "Inter Caetera" (1493), granted European monarchs the authority to explore and colonize non-Christian lands, which led to the justification of the enslavement of non-Christians.

- Transatlantic slave trade (15th-19th centuries): European powers, including Portugal, Spain, Britain, France, and the Netherlands, established colonies in the Americas and transported millions of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to work on plantations, farms, and in domestic service.

- Catholic Church's role: The Catholic Church played a complex role in the transatlantic slave trade. While some Catholic leaders and clergy condemned the slave trade, others justified it or participated in it. Some Catholic institutions, such as monasteries and convents, owned slaves. The transatlantic slave trade involved numerous contracts and agreements between European powers, African leaders, and slave traders. These contracts often specified the terms of the slave trade, including the number of enslaved people to be transported, the conditions of their transportation, and the distribution of profits. Some notable examples include:

- Treaties with African kingdoms: European powers, such as Portugal and Britain, signed treaties with African kingdoms, such as the Kingdom of Kongo and the Ashanti Empire, to establish trade relationships and secure access to enslaved people.

- Slave trade agreements: European powers and slave traders signed agreements with each other to transport enslaved people from Africa to the Americas. These agreements often included clauses that protected the interests of the signatories and ensured a profit.

- Asiento system: The Spanish crown granted licenses, known as asientos, to slave traders to supply enslaved people to Spanish colonies in the Americas. The asiento system allowed the Spanish crown to regulate the slave trade while generating revenue from the sale of licenses. Some of the key beneficiaries of the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery include:

- European powers: European powers, such as Britain, Portugal, Spain, France, and the Netherlands, benefited from the wealth and resources generated by the slave trade and the labor of enslaved people.

- Slave traders: Slave traders and merchants accumulated vast fortunes from the transatlantic slave trade, often through the exploitation and brutal treatment of enslaved people.

- Plantation owners: Plantation owners in the Americas, who purchased enslaved people to work on their plantations, benefited from the labor and exploitation of enslaved people.

Some notable examples of companies and individuals that benefited from the transatlantic slave trade include:

- Royal African Company: The Royal African Company, a British company, was granted a monopoly on the British slave trade in West Africa and profited from the transportation of enslaved people.

- Dutch West India Company: The Dutch West India Company, a Dutch company, played a significant role in the transatlantic slave trade and profited from the exploitation of enslaved people.

- Triangular trade: The triangular trade, which involved the exchange of goods, enslaved people, and commodities between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, generated vast profits for those involved in the trade.

These are just a few examples of the many individuals, companies, and institutions that benefited from the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery. The legacy of the slave trade and its ongoing impacts continue to be felt today

.A framework for repatriation, particularly in the context of historical injustices such as the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery, should include the following :

- **Acknowledgment and Apology**: Official acknowledgment of the historical injustices and ongoing impacts, accompanied by a formal apology.

- **Restitution**: Return of cultural artifacts, historical documents, and other tangible heritage items taken during the period of slavery and colonialism.

- **Compensation:** Financial compensation for the descendants of enslaved people, which could be in the form of individual payments, community development programs, or investments in education and economic empowerment.

- **Rehabilitation**: Measures to address the ongoing social, economic, and cultural impacts of slavery and colonialism, such as affirmative action programs, education and job training initiatives, and healthcare services.

- **Memorialization**: Establishment of memorials, museums, and other cultural institutions to preserve the history and memory of the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery.

- Education and Cultural Exchange: Programs to promote education about the history of slavery and its ongoing impacts, as well as cultural exchange initiatives to foster greater understanding and reconciliation.

- Community Development: Investments in community development programs, such as housing, infrastructure, and economic development initiatives, to benefit the descendants of enslaved people.

- International Cooperation: Collaboration and cooperation among countries to address the transnational dimensions of the transatlantic slave trade and its ongoing impacts.

Cultural and historical preservation: Supporting the preservation of African American culture and history, including museums, cultural centers, and educational initiatives. –

DNA testing: Using DNA testing to verify African ancestry and connection to specific ethnic groups or regions in Africa.

- Genealogical research: Conducting genealogical research to document ancestral connections to enslaved individuals.

- Community-based approaches: Developing community-based approaches to verifying ancestry and connection to the transatlantic slave trade, such as through community organizations and historical societies

. **Accountability and Transparency**: Establishment of accountability mechanisms and transparent processes for managing repatriation programs and ensuring that funds are used effectively.

- **Verification of ancestry**: Providing a scientific basis for verifying ancestry and connection to the transatlantic slave trade.

- Connection to African heritage: Helping individuals connect with their African heritage and cultural roots.

- Historical documentation: Contributing to the historical record of the transatlantic slave trade and its impacts. However, there are also potential challenges and limitations to consider, such as:

- Privacy concerns: Ensuring the privacy and security of genetic data and personal information.

- Limited access: Addressing issues of access and equity in terms of DNA testing and genealogical research.

- Complexity of ancestry: Acknowledging the complexity of ancestry and the potential for multiple ancestral connections.