

ADG Speech Monday, 19 September 2022, *Ulysses from Ghana* screening, UNESCO HQ

Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to represent UNESCO at the screening of 'Ulysses from Ghana'. This docufiction aims to guide us through the difficult yet indispensable process of collecting and keeping alive scattered memories of victims of slavery. When Dr Mohamed Ben Abdallah wrote his play "Slaves" in 1972, the silence surrounding the history of slavery and slave trade was still thick and this dark episode was denied its place in universal memory. Fifty years later, Bernd Alder is offering us the opportunity to revisit the message contained in the play through a contemporary lens. In doing so, he forces us to reflect on the link between historical forms of slavery and its contemporary manifestations. He also shows us that art plays a critical role in humanizing the millions of enslaved women, men and children as well as recognizing their incredible resilience and fights for liberation that continue to inspire us.

At UNESCO, we know that perpetuating the memory of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade - such as the 30 000 enslaved men and women sent from Elmina to cross the Ocean to the Americas each year in the 18th century – goes hand in hand with our commitment to fight racism, discrimination and all forms of intolerance.

UNESCO's 'Routes of Enslaved Peoples project' addresses the deconstruction of racist bias towards Afro descendants and indigenous peoples through capacity building and artistic activities, including healing and the fight against modern slavery, anchored in research and a stronger evidence base approach. A study on the cost of racism is currently being carried out to assist policymakers and other stakeholders to address impediments that deny certain groups a fair access to education, housing, employment and justice. We are also promoting the visibility and the valorisation of memory sites for the benefit of local communities.

This strong commitment will notably be showcased in the 2nd UNESCO Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination that will take place in Mexico City on 28-29 November.

I would like to commend the Colombian Embassy in Ghana for its support to the realisation of this artistic and historical project and express the hope that other Member States will follow suit and help to keep the history of the slave trade vivid in the mind of women and men around the world.

"It doesn't matter the colour of your skin or where you come from; you can always become what you make up your mind to be". With your permission, Mrs Akosua Abdallah, I would like to conclude by these words from your father Dr Ben Abdallah. They capture the very essence of our combat against racism and discrimination to build inclusive, peaceful, and resilient societies where each one of us has access to equal opportunity.

Thank you.