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Launch of Website for Slavery Memorial Important Step Forward, Says Ban

By United Nations News

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February 1, 2011 -- Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today lauded the launch of a website for the permanent memorial honouring the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, calling it an important step forward in making the memorial a reality at the United Nations Headquarters complex.



The memorial is a reminder that millions of Africans were violently removed from their homelands, ruthlessly abused and robbed of their dignity, Mr. Ban said in a message delivered on his behalf by Kiyo Akasaka, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, at the inauguration of the website.

"The memorial will also remind the world of the bravery of those slaves, abolitionists and unsung heroes who managed to rise up against an oppressive system and end the practice," the Secretary-General said, adding that it will also serve as a call to action against contemporary manifestations of slavery.

Mr. Ban noted that the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the 19th century did not eradicate the practice globally.

Slavery continues to manifest itself in such exploitative practices as serfdom, debt bondage and forced and bonded labour; trafficking in women and children, domestic slavery and forced prostitution, including of children; sexual slavery, forced marriage and the sale of wives; child labour and child servitude, Mr. Ban said.

"This reality obliges the international community to bring perpetrators to justice and to continue pursuing with vigour its efforts to uphold human rights and human dignity," he added.

He praised Jamaica, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Group for their initiative to set up the permanent memorial and for

creating the website that will advance that effort. He also thanked all Governments that have made financial contributions to the project and encouraged others to follow suit.

Ambassador Raymond Wolfe of Jamaica is heading efforts to erect the memorial, while a committee of interested States is also participating in the trust fund set up in 2009 to pay for the construction. An estimated \$4.5 million is needed if the memorial is to be erected by 2012.