

**Opening Address – Old and New African Diasporas Networks: Before and After COVID-19**  
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***Pan-African Disaster Resilience: Pre & Post COVID-19***

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**The main objectives of the United Nations General Assembly's designated International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024 are to: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/programme-activities>**

- 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.

**According to the UN** <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/population/index.html>, the continent of Africa's population of 1.3 billion is expected to double by 2050. During Africa's most horrific anthropogenic disaster, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there were over 12.5 million Africans taken forcibly from Africa and shipped to the Americas, <https://www.neh.gov/news/voyages-the-transatlantic-slave-trade-database>, with as many as 2 million casualties during the Middle Passage. Consequently, there are currently over 200 million people of African descent in North, Central & South America and the Caribbean ([www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)), as well as approximately 7 million people of African descent in Europe  
[http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/FS%20People%20of%20African%20Descent\\_final.pdf](http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/FS%20People%20of%20African%20Descent_final.pdf) and further members of the African diaspora domiciled in Asia, Russia, etc..

These combined populations in Africa and in the Diaspora have been and continue to be at risk for an array of subsequent anthropogenic and biogenic disasters. For the approximately 46 million African-Americans <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/IPE120218>, the Emancipation Proclamation, signed by President Abraham Lincoln on Jan. 1, 1863, did not end vulnerability to man-made disasters, as evidenced by 3,446 recorded African-American lynchings between 1882 and 1968 <http://archive.tuskegee.edu/archive/handle/123456789/507> and the 6 million African-Americans who were part of the Great Migration from 1916 to 1970 to the urban Northeast, Midwest and West, to escape the racial segregation, discrimination, unemployment and poverty in the Southern states. (Wilkerson, Isabel. *Smithsonian Magazine*, Sept. 2016).

The African continent's well-documented anthropogenic disasters persisted throughout the colonial and neo-colonial periods, with concomitant economic exploitation, environmental degradation, apartheid, transfer pricing, and natural resource plundering.

Biogenic disasters, in many cases intensified by insufficiently protective public policies, augmented public vulnerability to storms, fires, drought, invasions of the desert locust *Schistocerca gregaria*, famine and extreme manifestations of malnutrition, i.e. kwashiorkor and marasmus. Eradication remains elusive for Malaria, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, poliomyelitis, leishmaniasis, lymphatic filariasis, Ebola, SARS and HIV/AIDS.

Prior to the onslaught of COVID-19, there have been an array of disaster life-cycle management and resilience initiatives, including:

- **Disaster Resilience Scientific Solutions Institute (D.Re.S.S.) – ZIMBABWE**  
<http://www.globalresilience.co.zw>
- **GREAT GREEN WALL FOR THE SAHARA AND SAHEL INITIATIVE**  
<https://www.greatgreenwall.org/about-great-green-wall>
- **IGAD** (Intergovernmental Authority on Development): <http://igad.int/> A consortium of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. **IGAD Building Resilience to Disasters Through Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation Project In Africa**
- **GFCS: Global Framework for Climate Services: UN-Wide Initiative for Climate Change Adaptation, with Partnerships including WMO, WHO, FAO, UNESCO, UNDP, EU, CICERO-Norway, UNEP, EUMETSAT, World Bank, WFP, UNISDR, Red Cross/Red Crescent, CGIAR-Climate Change, Ag & Food Security (CCAFS), CMI - Chr. Michelsen Institute, Global Water Partnership (GWP), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), IUGG (International Union of Geodesy & Geophysics), etc.** <http://www.wmo.int/gfcs/partnership>
- 2014- **National Disaster Resilience Competition** Announced by President Barak Obama, modeled after the partnership between the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and the Rockefeller Foundation to allocate \$1 billion in funding for vulnerable communities affected by natural disasters in the USA, and to establish “Resilience Academies” “Between 2011 and 2013, the federal government spent \$136 billion on disaster relief in the United States.”  
<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/our-work/initiatives/national-disaster-resilience-competition/>
- **SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2015-2030** [www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)
- **EU-ACP (AFRICA CARIBBEAN PACIFIC) BUILDING DISASTER RESILIENCE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN REGIONS, COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES**
- **AFRICA WORKING GROUP ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION | 25 -26 OCTOBER 2016| Zambia**
- **6TH AFRICA REGIONAL PLATFORM & 5TH HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON DRR | 22 -25 NOVEMBER 2016| Mauritius**
- **GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION | 22 -26 MAY 2017| Cancun, Mexico**
- **RESILIENT AFRICA NETWORK (RAN) UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY IN KAMPALA, UGANDA, FOUNDED IN 2012 & FUNDED BY USAID**
- **TULANE UNIVERSITY DISASTER RESILIENCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (DRLA) – New Orleans, Louisiana** <http://www2.tulane.edu/drla/drla-resilient-africa-network.cfm>

Of course, there are to date no proven treatments for COVID-19, despite the frequent advertisements by the President of the USA for hydroxychloroquine and by the promotion of Covid Organics (CVO) by the President of Madagascar.

As of yesterday, May 20, 2020, the Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC) Dashboard <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/> reports 92,348 COVID-19 cases; 2,912 deaths and 36,117 recoveries.

Meanwhile, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports "...current data suggest a disproportionate burden of illness and death among racial and ethnic minority groups... Among COVID-19 deaths for which race and ethnicity data were available, [New York Citypdf iconexternal icon](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html) identified death rates among Black/African American persons (92.3 deaths per 100,000 population) and Hispanic/Latino persons (74.3) that were substantially higher than that of white (45.2) or Asian (34.5) persons...." <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html> Among the factors contributing to such health disparity are residential segregation in densely populated areas and in "food deserts", inadequate access to health care and health insurance, with associated underlying health conditions, "over-represented in jails, prisons, and detention centers," disproportionate number of workers in essential industries with a lack of sick leave, etc. (cdc.gov, op. cit.)

**With respect to the potential of enhancing Post-COVID-19 disaster resilience in Africa and in the African Diaspora, it will be incumbent upon African governments to strengthen, advance and empower the African Union, Pan-African Parliament and the Africa CDC, with substantially increased support from the UN, the G 7, other major international bi-lateral, multi-lateral, foundations, corporations and NGO donors, to build capacity for state-of-the-science multi-disaster life-cycle management, including preparedness, early warning, emergency intervention, search & rescue, adequate treatment facilities & infrastructure, rapid data dissemination & transparency, damage assessment and post-disaster societal recovery and environmental reclamation.**

Adjuvant resources critical to achieving such disaster resilience would be strengthening, financing and on-going deployment of the capabilities within the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) in collaboration with their academic counterparts within the African Diaspora, [i.e. the HBCU and PBI member institutions of the National Association for Equal Opportunity (NAFEO) and of the Association of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (UDUAL).] This is an engagement in which the African Renaissance & Diaspora Network (ARDN) is committed, in connection with its mandate to promote the UN Sustainability Goals. Other major resources that are well-positioned to benefit from increased funding in order to further advance and disseminate their expertise in support of Pan-African disaster resilience are the super-computer facility in Cape Town: the Centre for High Performance Computing (CHPC), as well as the combined membership expertise of the African Association for Remote Sensing of Environment (AARSE).

An example of disaster early warning capacity that could be strengthened and replicated continentally is the NATO Science for Peace funded Mediterranean Dialogue Earth Observatory, based in Morocco, for utilizing real-time earth observing satellite data for early warning of disasters, including vector-borne epidemics. (Rochon, et al., 2013; Rochon, *Encyclopedia of Geography*, 2010)

"Although the United Nations Charter: Space and Major Disasters generously provides both moderate and high resolution data on a pro bono basis from multiple sources during declared disasters, there

**remains a demonstrable need to further build capacity for training localized expertise, power sustainability, data storage, data dissemination, interpretation, fusion and optimal utilization, especially in advance of impending disasters, as well as during and subsequent to such disasters (Rochon, et al. AARSE, 2016)**