

UN Launches Trust Fund for Slavery Memorial

The United Nations (UN) has established a trust fund for a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

A ceremony was held recently at the UN headquarters in New York to launch the Permanent Memorial Trust Fund and to announce the appointment of hip-hop pioneer and philanthropist Russell Simmons as Goodwill Ambassador for the project.

{mosmodule phpinc=ttpopup.php,Jamaica}'s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Raymond O. Wolfe, in his remarks at the launch, said that as Jamaican and a Caribbean national, he was proud of this important initiative, which is being led by member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) with strong support from the African Union.

"It is with a sense of duty and deep humility that we seek to honour the memories of our ancestors, who were brought to the Caribbean and other regions as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. (This) ceremony takes us one step forward in realising our objective," said Ambassador Wolfe, who is also chair of the Permanent Memorial Committee. He urged the world community to view the project as a "tangible source of hope and a means of remembrance of the struggles to break free of the hardships faced under the pernicious system of slavery and colonial rule". Mr. Simmons, for his part, told the gathering that it was a great honour to be appointed the face and voice of such an iconic initiative that will remind generations of their shared history and legacy. He said that the story of slavery was not being told enough. Estimated to cost \$3.5 million, the Permanent Memorial will be an architecturally designed sculpture, embodying each affected region of the transatlantic slave trade and will be built on the grounds of the UN headquarters in New York City. A total of 122 member states of the world body have so far co-sponsored the General assembly Resolution 63/5, establishing the permanent memorial. When completed in 2012, it will pay homage to the thousands of African natives, who lost their lives by choosing death instead of facing the great unknown on the horrific sea voyage ahead of them, those who suffered, fought and died in the opposition to their new found lot of enslavement and those who rose up and fought for abolition of the despicable and inhumane system of slavery. Other speakers at the morning launching ceremony included; UN Under Secretary General for Communication and Public Information, Kiyotaka Akasaka; Executive Director, United Nations Office for Partnerships, Amir Dossal; Permanent Representative of Sudan to the UN and chair of the African Group of Ambassadors, Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad; Haitian Ambassador and chair of CARICOM, Leo Merores; Ambassador of Sierra Leone, Shekou M. Touray; Ambassador of Grenada, Dessima M. Williams; and Ambassador of Cape Verde Islands, Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima.