Mr. President,

I would like to thank the Secretary General for his report under the agenda item, ‘Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade’.

Mr. President,

Transatlantic slave trade is one of the most shameful chapters in human history.

The wrenching of people and their transportation away from their own people and homes to distant lands, across an ocean, makes every other atrocity committed in the history of mankind pale into insignificance.

The work of the United Nations can never be complete until we emphatically and without any reservation condemn the transatlantic slave trade. We firmly believe there should be a genuine sense of acceptance that these horrific crimes took place along with sincere repentance of the same.

It is also imperative that the international community takes upon itself the commitment to never let such crimes ever take place again. Additionally, at the level of the United Nations we must take all initiatives to ensure that future generations do not
forget the grief and tragedy borne by the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The construction of a Permanent Memorial will be a fitting tribute of the United Nations to the millions of victims of the transatlantic slave trade. We are humbled and honoured to be part of the initiative to erect a Permanent Memorial.

Mr. President,

With our contribution of US $ 260,000/-, India is proud to be the lead contributor to the “United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships – Permanent Memorial” for receiving contributions to erect the Permanent Memorial.

India’s contribution is reflective of our firm belief that the international community must pay homage to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The Trust Fund, however, as of date has only received a mere US $ 800,000. This falls significantly short of the anticipated expenditure of US $ 4.5 million for the construction of the Memorial.

It is, therefore, obvious that there is an imperative for the international community to actually come forward and contribute to this noble cause. We, therefore, strongly urge all countries, and especially those who benefited from the transatlantic slave trade, to come forth and generously contribute to show their earnest acceptance that wrongs were committed and there is a sense of repentance.

The international community cannot let the idea of this memorial just remain on its design board.

We also hope that the Committee which has been established to oversee the construction of the Permanent Memorial finalizes its Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO at the earliest so that the international design competition for the Memorial could be launched as soon as possible.

Mr. President,

I would like to place on record India’s support for the various activities and programmes undertaken by the Department of Public Information to commemorate the “International Day of Remembrance” every year on March 25.

We would also like to support the call for adequate, regular and predictable financial allocation to the Department of Public Information in organising these events in New York as well as in various countries through the network of the UN information centres.
Education has a critical role in creating awareness amongst present and future generations, about the history, causes and impact of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Its importance cannot be overemphasized.

Mr President,

We are happy that the CARICOM has today introduced their draft resolution titled “Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade”. We have been co-sponsoring this resolution since 2007 and today I am happy to co-sponsor this resolution again.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by quoting George Mason, one of the founding fathers of the United States, who said, “the augmentation of slaves weakens the states; and such a trade is diabolical in itself and disgraceful to mankind”.

We have a chance to pay tribute to the victims who suffered this disgrace by openheartedly contributing to the Trust Fund.

This is, Mr President, the least we can do.

Thank you.