

Commemoration of United Nations Designated International Year of People of African Descent 2011

07 January 2011

Belfast, NORTHERN IRELAND: The Afro-Community Support Organisation of Northern Ireland (ACSONI) today is launching its support for the United Nations launch of the International Year of People of African Descent.

The Afro-Community Support Organisation Northern Ireland was formed in 2003 as an independent regional community organisation to address the needs and aspirations of people who are from the continent of Africa and African descendent nations across Northern Ireland. This includes people who are of African, Caribbean, African American, and African European heritage (an estimated 6,000 people in Northern Ireland today).

ACSONI's vision is of a society that enables fair and equal treatment of all individuals, where equality, inter-culturalism and human rights are valued and embraced; a society that is inclusive, shared and free from all forms of discrimination.

At ACSONI, our mission is to promote the capabilities and interests of Northern Ireland's Afro-Community, and to ensure that all individuals are empowered and given equal opportunity to contribute to civic life in Northern Ireland.

Alfred Abolarin, ACSONI's Manager said: *"Beginning from January 2011. ACSONI will be running series of activities and programmes throughout the year 2011 to commemorate this very important and significant year. ACSONI will be holding a major international conference in May 2011 in Belfast looking at the Human Rights Implications of Using Images and Messages of Africa and Africans. ACSONI will also be working with our key partners to strengthen regional and international relationships for the benefit of people of African and Caribbean descent in Northern Ireland; ACSONI will work to ensure their full enjoyment of economic, social, and civic rights. Our heartbeat is to promote equal participation and integration of people of African descent in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of Northern Irish society."*

As part of this commemoration, ACSONI hopes to launch a community DVD and also publish findings from a survey and opinion poll carried out with students from the Queen's University Belfast in 2010. Later this year; ACSONI will also commission research to further investigate peoples understanding and perceptions of and about people of African descent in Northern Ireland.

Dr Christopher Stange, ACSONI's Public Relations Officer and Hon. Consul for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in Northern Ireland further added: *"It is vitally important to formally recognise the unique contributions and enriching cultures of individuals of African descent across the globe. We must never forget the shared origins of many of the world's developing countries and the sacrifices they made on the path to independence. There are still many challenges of our times to overcome, be it eliminating poverty, achieving the Millennium*

Development Goals and sustainable practices, trade injustice, protecting the environment and dealing with the violence, racism and discrimination in and between our societies.”

As part of the AFRICA WEEK celebrations in Belfast in May 2011, ACSONI in partnership with Melody Entertainment and other organisations of African descent will be hosting the first ever MISS AFRICA and MR AFRICA Northern Ireland.

The United Nations has designated 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent and the Afro-Community Support Organisation Northern Ireland (ACSONI) will be providing programmes to highlight the contributions and issues faced by people of African and Caribbean descent residing in the province.

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Notes for Editor: The Afro-Community Support Organisation Northern Ireland (ACSONI) was formed in July 2003 and became a registered charity on the 17th of February 2004 and has formal representation on forums and statutory panels in Northern Ireland to give a voice to African, Caribbean and people of Mixed Heritage African background in Northern Ireland.

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