



RIGHT OF ABODE FOR DESCENDANTS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

A Policy and Legislative Framework for African Union Member States

POLICY WHITE PAPER

Prepared by the Coalition for the Repatriation of Descendants of Enslaved Africans (CRDEA)

August 2026

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Executive Summary

The Right of Abode for Descendants of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a policy and legislative framework proposed by the Coalition for the Repatriation of Descendants of Enslaved Africans (CRDEA) for consideration by African Union member states. It proposes a formal, government-administered pathway to permanent residence for individuals who can demonstrate documented ancestral ties to the transatlantic slave trade and who hold nationality outside the African continent.

CRDEA was established in response to the practical barriers facing descendants of enslaved Africans seeking to return to the continent. Individuals pursuing return today frequently encounter inconsistent guidance and, in some cases, unregulated intermediaries. This framework is intended to replace that uncertainty with a clear, government-recognized pathway.

The proposal draws on established international precedent for ancestry-linked residency and citizenship frameworks, including Israel's Law of Return, Portugal's Sephardic nationality law, and Ghana's Right of Abode under its Year of Return programme. It sets out proposed eligibility criteria, a verification process grounded in documented evidence, government-administered application procedures, and safeguards to protect both applicants and host states.

CRDEA's broader advocacy relationship with the governments of Kenya and Botswana, established through its African Diaspora SME Investment Initiative (ADSII) submissions, provides a foundation for introducing this framework to the same ministries, alongside continued engagement with the African Union and its member states more broadly.

1. Purpose and Scope

This white paper sets out CRDEA's proposed Right of Abode framework: a policy and model-legislative proposal for consideration by African Union member states. It is offered as a template that any interested government may adopt, adapt, or decline, in full accordance with its own sovereign legislative process.

The framework addresses a defined population: individuals whose ancestors were subjected to the transatlantic slave trade and who currently hold nationality outside the African continent. It proposes a route to permanent residence for this population, distinct from, and complementary to, existing citizenship, asylum, and investor-visa categories.

2. Historical and Policy Context

The transatlantic slave trade displaced millions of Africans from the continent over more than three centuries, severing lineages, communities, and, in most cases, any documented connection between descendants and their ancestral nations. This displacement was not voluntary migration; it was forced

removal, and it left most affected descendants without the citizenship-by-descent documentation that conventional return-based residency frameworks typically require.

A number of African and Caribbean governments and institutions have, in recent years, taken formal steps to address this gap. Ghana's Year of Return and its subsequent Right of Abode framework, the African Union's recognition of the diaspora as its designated sixth region, and CARICOM's Ten-Point Reparatory Justice Programme each reflect a growing institutional consensus that structured return pathways serve both as a matter of historical redress and as a practical instrument of national development.

CRDEA's Right of Abode proposal is offered in this context: as a policy mechanism consistent with a broader and growing body of African and Caribbean institutional practice, rather than as an isolated request.

3. Rationale: Benefits to Host Governments

Social Cohesion and Historical Reconciliation

Formal residency pathways acknowledge the historical displacement of the transatlantic slave trade and support renewed connection between diaspora descendants and communities on the continent.

Diaspora Investment and Engagement

A structured right of return strengthens diaspora ties to the continent, supporting increased direct investment, remittances, and philanthropic engagement in host economies.

Skills and Knowledge Transfer

Many descendants have built professional careers across a wide range of fields. Structured residency allows member states to draw on this expertise directly, supporting human capital development.

Economic Growth and Development

Skilled and entrepreneurial diaspora returnees contribute to new business formation, employment, and innovation within host economies.

Cultural Exchange and Diaspora Heritage Tourism

Structured return pathways deepen cultural exchange between diaspora communities and African nations, and attract diaspora travellers seeking connection to ancestral history, supporting tourism and cultural sectors.

International and Diplomatic Standing

Demonstrating openness to diaspora return strengthens the international profile and diplomatic relationships of African Union member states.

Regional Integration

A coordinated, continent-wide approach to diaspora return supports the African Union's broader regional integration objectives.

4. International Precedent

CRDEA's proposal is not without precedent. It proposes parity with ancestry-linked residency and citizenship frameworks already accepted in international law and practice:

Framework	Country / Body	Mechanism
Law of Return	Israel	Ancestry-based pathway to citizenship for the global Jewish diaspora
Portuguese Nationality Law	Portugal	Ancestry-based citizenship pathway for descendants of Sephardic Jews
Right of Abode	Ghana	Structured diaspora residency and citizenship under the Year of Return programme
Citizenship by Descent	Multiple Commonwealth states	Ancestry-linked permanent residency and naturalisation pathways
Reparatory Justice Framework	CARICOM (Caribbean Community)	Structured diaspora reintegration and capital repatriation programme

Ghana's model, combining a formally legislated Right of Abode with a supporting administrative process, offers the closest structural precedent for the framework proposed in this paper.

5. Proposed Legislative Framework

5.1 Right of Abode

Descendants of the transatlantic slave trade would have the right to apply for, and be granted, permanent residence in a member state, regardless of their current nationality or citizenship, subject to the eligibility and verification provisions below.

5.2 Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must provide documented evidence of ancestral ties to the transatlantic slave trade and must hold nationality outside the African continent. CRDEA recommends that eligibility be established primarily through documented genealogical and historical evidence, which may include archival slave-registry records, historical shipping manifests, church, plantation, or estate records, and documented family lineage. Applicants may additionally submit corroborating ancestry testing from an accredited provider as supporting evidence. No single form of documentation is treated as dispositive; the reviewing authority evaluates the totality of evidence submitted.

5.3 Application Process

CRDEA recommends that each government establish a clear, transparent, and government-administered application process, including defined documentation requirements, a published fee schedule, and defined processing timelines. An illustrative process is set out in Section 6.

5.4 Support and Assistance

CRDEA recommends that the host government provide advisory services and settlement resources to streamline the application process and support the integration of successful applicants, consistent with the government's existing settlement and immigration infrastructure.

5.5 Rights and Limitations

Right of Abode holders would enjoy the same legal rights, protections, and privileges as permanent residents, with two standard exceptions consistent with permanent residency status in most jurisdictions: participation in national elections and eligibility for public office, both of which remain reserved for citizens under each member state's constitution.

5.6 Illustrative Fee Schedule

CRDEA proposes an application processing fee in the range of USD 200, and a Right of Abode grant fee in the range of USD 1,500 for an individual applicant or USD 2,500 for a family, payable upon approval. These figures are illustrative starting parameters; final fee schedules remain fully within each government's own determination.

6. Verification, Process, and Safeguards

6.1 Illustrative Application Steps

1. Confirm eligibility and assemble documented evidence of ancestral ties to the transatlantic slave trade
2. Review the specific application requirements published by the relevant government agency
3. Submit required documentation, including a valid passport, identity photographs, background clearance from the applicant's current country of residence, and proof of financial self-sufficiency
4. Complete the official application form and remit the application processing fee
5. Submit the completed application to the designated government office for review
6. Undergo government review and verification, including confirmation of submitted documentation
7. Receive formal notification of the decision
8. Upon approval, remit the Right of Abode fee and arrive in the host country within a defined settlement window (recommended: six months)

6.2 Anti-Fraud and Data Protection

All applicant documentation is subject to independent verification, and all applicant data is handled in accordance with the host government's data protection legislation, used solely for application administration.

6.3 Periodic Review

CRDEA recommends that each government periodically review the implementation of its Right of Abode framework and adjust documentation requirements, fees, and administrative procedures as needed to ensure continued effectiveness.

7. Relationship to the African Diaspora SME Investment Initiative (ADSII)

Right of Abode and ADSII are complementary but distinct CRDEA policy tracks. Right of Abode proposes a general, ancestry-based permanent residency pathway, open to descendants of the transatlantic slave trade regardless of investment activity. ADSII proposes a narrower, investment-conditioned pilot residency category tied to verified SME-scale investment and subject to ongoing performance review. An applicant may qualify under either framework independently, or may hold Right of Abode status while separately participating in an ADSII pilot as an investor. A government may adopt one, both, or neither framework; each remains fully severable from the other.

8. Current Engagement and Advocacy

CRDEA advocates directly to the African Union and its member states in support of formal Right of Abode and residency pathways for descendants of enslaved Africans. This advocacy builds on CRDEA's existing engagement with the governments of Kenya and Botswana through its ADSII policy submissions, and extends to continued outreach across the wider African and Caribbean community. CRDEA is available to present this framework, alongside a country-specific implementation brief, to any interested ministry, the African Union Commission, or a relevant regional body.

9. Implementation Roadmap

9. Initial review of this white paper by the relevant ministry or ministries
10. A technical briefing between CRDEA and an inter-ministerial or African Union working group
11. Refinement of eligibility, verification, and fee parameters in line with the host government's constitutional and administrative framework
12. Legislative drafting and review through the host government's own legislative process
13. Enactment and establishment of an administrative body to receive and process applications
14. Periodic review of implementation and outcomes

10. Conclusion

CRDEA's Right of Abode proposal does not ask any government to alter its citizenship laws or constitutional structure. It proposes a defined, government-administered permanent residency pathway for a specific and

historically identifiable population, grounded in established international precedent and structured to deliver social, cultural, and economic benefit to host states.

CRDEA respectfully requests that this white paper be considered for review by the appropriate ministry, the African Union Commission, or a relevant regional body, and welcomes the opportunity to present a country-specific implementation brief.

Coalition for the Repatriation of Descendants of Enslaved Africans (CRDEA)

Right of Abode for Descendants of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

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CRDEA provides policy information and programme frameworks. This document does not constitute legal or immigration advice. Each government retains full authority over its own legislative and constitutional process. Right of Abode programme parameters are subject to negotiation and adoption at each government's discretion.