

**AMBASSADOR DAVID COMISSIONG'S PRESENTATION**  
**to the**  
**UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM**  
**on**  
**PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

**PANEL: PAN-AFRICANISM FOR DIGNITY, JUSTICE AND PEACE**

Brothers and Sisters:

I want to begin by invoking the names and spirits of such “giants” of Pan-Africanism as Emperor Jean Jacques Dessalines of Haiti, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Henry Sylvester Williams, W. E. B. Du Bois, the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, Arnold Josiah Ford, C. L. R. James, George Padmore, Kwame N’krumah, Emperor Haile Selassie, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Ture and Bob Marley. These are the shoulders on which we stand.

Pan-Africanism has a long history going back centuries, but most relevant to our discussion of Pan-Africanism at this **Permanent Forum on People of African Descent** is the most recent phase of Pan-Africanism – the phase of state or nation centred Pan-Africanism which was launched with Ghana’s attainment of independence in 1957, and was consolidated with the establishment of the **Organization of African Unity** in 1963.

Since those early heady days, state or nation centred Pan-Africanism has had a chequered history. There have been successes, but also failures. There have been victories, but also defeats.

But it behoves us to be ever mindful of the overall upward trajectory of state centred Pan-Africanism and of such historic monuments of achievement as – for example - the establishment of the **Caribbean Free Trade Association** in 1965 and its evolution into **CARICOM** by 1973; the historic Angolan and Cuban military victory at the Battle of **Cuito Cuanavale**; completion of the de-colonization of the African continent; the victory over South African apartheid; founding of the **African Union**; the United Nations World Conference Against Racism and its Durban Declaration and Program of Action; the launch of the A. U.’s Sixth Region initiative; the launch of

CARICOM's Campaign for Reparatory Justice, and, of course, the establishment of this **U. N. Permanent Forum On People of African Descent**.

The point I am making is that even though sometimes we are very critical of ourselves and of our failures, we need to keep in mind that in the overarching scheme of things we are going forward and making progress !

The long history of Pan-Africanism – from the early days of individual activists and civil society organizations to the establishment of independent black and African nations and the consolidation of regional and continental multi-nation organizations – has surely taught us – the black and African peoples of the world – that Pan-Africanism is our most potent defensive weapon, and our most powerful tool of development.

And the message I bring from the Caribbean Community is that we have embraced and internalized the idea that our present and future as Caribbean people and nations are ultimately bound up with our currently unfolding and developing relationship with the continent of Africa and with the **African Union**. We are clear : that's our future.

In September of 2021, the governments of CARICOM and the AU made history by staging the inaugural Africa/CARICOM Heads of Government Summit, and ever since then there has been a major follow-up centred around the presence and operations of the **African Export/Import Bank** (Afreximbank) in the Caribbean.

In addition, CARICOM nations are also increasingly establishing Embassies on the African continent. My own country of Barbados : in the last two years we have established embassies in Ghana and Kenya and an honorary Consul office in Rwanda.

Furthermore, on the trade and economic front, we are determined to extend the African continent's **Pan-African Payments and Settlement System** to the Caribbean, and to work towards establishing a trade linkage between the African Continental Free Trade System and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

And in February of this year, the African Union Heads of State passed a Resolution committing the AU to the pursuit of Reparations for European imposed African enslavement, and to partnering with CARICOM in pursuing the Reparations Campaign.

So there are many successes !

But, even while we celebrate these pleasing recent developments, we must be mindful of crisis situations and existential challenges that demand our attention and action as an African people.

I refer to such matters as –

- the prolonged crisis that has engulfed the Caribbean nation of Haiti – much of it caused by a long-standing neo-colonialist campaign against the world’s first black Republic;
- the several military conflicts that are be-devilling the African continent – in the Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, military coups in West Africa, and the list goes on;
- the “Climate Crisis” that is threatening the stability and even the long term viability of so many Caribbean and African nations;
- the continuing racist denigration of black and African people worldwide – the institutionalized violence and systematic denial of human rights that so many of our people are subjected to, particularly when they constitute racial minorities in white majority societies;
- and finally, the continued existence of colonialism and of European colonies in so many of our regions, especially our Caribbean region- the Caribbean is still the most colonized region, and we need to do something about it.

So, I want to conclude by urging us to use this United Nations space to discuss how African and Caribbean governments can be more engaged with and supportive of each other in dealing with critical internal issues. There is no reason why the Governments of the African Union should not be partnering with the Governments of CARICOM in working out and implementing - in tandem with the people of Haiti- a solution to the crisis in that heroic Caribbean nation.

Similarly, the statesmen of CARICOM should be sitting in Council with their AU peers and lending their insights, experience and resources to the task of peace-making and nation-building in Africa.

The Permanent Forum can urge this greater collaboration, solidarity and partnership on our Caribbean and African and black governments across the world.

Let us also use this space to discuss how the entirety of Global Africa can rally around and support the **Bridgetown Initiative** – the cutting edge revolutionary plan that was crafted in Barbados last year to fundamentally reform the inherently unjust and unequal global economic and financial system, thereby bringing relief and much needed support to the black and brown nations and people of this world. I urge everyone to research the Bridgetown Initiative, and let us all rally around it.

And yes, please let this Permanent Forum take the lead in crafting a UN Declaration on the promotion, protection and full respect for the human rights of people of African. But in doing so, please remember that you would be building upon the historic work of many of the past stalwarts and champions of Pan-Africanism : most notably, the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey and his 1920 **Declaration Of The Rights Of The Negro Peoples Of The World**.

Madam Chair, brothers and sisters, on behalf of the Government and people of Barbados, and also on behalf of our Caribbean Community, I extend very best wishes to the members of this Permanent Forum. We wish you every possible success, and pledge our committed and continuing solidarity and support.

I thank you very much.