

**REPARATIONS, SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Permit me to begin by reflecting on that historic day of Monday 16th September 2013 – the day on which governmental and civil society leaders of the **Caribbean Community** (CARICOM) came together in Kingstown, St. Vincent to fashion a CARICOM Reparations Campaign for the crimes of *Native Genocide* and *African Enslavement*.

Our CARICOM Heads of Government had met a couple of months earlier, and had made the historic decision to embark upon a Reparative Justice campaign against the relevant governments and institutions of Western Europe.

And so, scores of us journeyed to St. Vincent to put the whole thing together.

And one of the memorable things that we said at that historic Kingstown gathering was that the 21st Century was destined to be the **“*Century of Reparative Justice*”**.

Indeed, we declared that we were embarking on a Campaign in which we would be striving for a worldwide transformation of centuries-old relationships between the black, brown and white peoples of the world – relationships that, tragically, were (and are) still based on old but persisting patterns of discrimination, exploitation, inequity and domination – relationships that are rooted in centuries of imperialism, colonialism, systemic racial discrimination, *African enslavement* and *Native genocide*.

We were determined that our Campaign would promote the sort of global justice that the world so desperately needs – reparatory justice in all of its dimensions – social justice, economic justice, climate justice – and that we would be striving for the new relationships that would shift the current

destructive, international economic model, towards social, economic and environmental sustainability.

So, as you can see, Reparations – for us in the Caribbean Community – is not merely about a money payment! Yes, there is a money component, but Reparations is about much more than money! Rather, it is a revolutionary programme of transformation that is designed to eradicate *structures, practices* and *consequences* of anti-black and anti-Indigenous racism, and to create just societies and a just International Order.

Put another way : Our CARICOM Reparatory Justice Campaign is designed to address the historical legacies of under-development that are directly linked to the European perpetrated crimes of Native genocide and African enslavement.

And we felt that this was the journey on which we were embarking!

But, even as CARICOM was advancing this new Reparative Justice Vision, the then Conservative government of the United Kingdom was implementing its so-called “*Hostile Environment Policy*” towards black and brown residents of the UK; the Neo-Conservative establishment of the USA was doubling down on its agenda of making the 21st Century the “*American Century*” – a century of singular American power and dominance; and all across Europe, racist neo-fascist politicians and parties were garnering popular support.

So, we have not had the field all to ourselves! Indeed, over the past eleven years, we have had to struggle to build out our international Reparations Movement in the face of great opposition and contestation. But what is new about that? As Frederick Douglas warned us – “*Power concedes nothing without a demand ... If there is no struggle, there is no progress.*”

Over the past decade the members of our CARICOM Reparations Movement have never lost sight of the fact that we are heirs to a Pan-African heritage of

collective revolutionary struggle – in the Caribbean, in Africa, and indeed across every single region of our African Diaspora.

And so, at every opportunity and at every turn, we sought out fellow travellers and collaborators – those who were not merely talking the talk, but who were also walking it with seriousness and conviction. We reached out and built relationships with Reparations **“doers”** in Africa, in North America, across Latin America and in the African diaspora communities of Europe.

And I am here today to tell you that the CARICOM Reparations Movement is convinced that we – all of us across Global Africa who put our hands to the plough – have finally succeeded in establishing a solid and permanent Global Reparations Movement!

If you did not know it before, than hear it from me now:- We have achieved a Global Reparations Movement; it is here to stay; it wields a formidable moral and political power; and it will not be denied!

And so, it is against this background that I would now like to humbly propose the following Agenda items for our Global Reparations Movement:-

(1) Full Support For The Proposal of this UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent for the establishment of a new Special International Tribunal to adjudicate Reparations Claims and Quantify Reparations Remedies.

We need such a Special International Tribunal on Reparations because there is at present no international Court properly equipped to deal with a Reparations claim of the magnitude and complexity of our claim for Reparations for hundreds of years of African enslavement.

The closest that we have to such an institution is the **International Court of Justice** (ICJ), but not only is the ICJ inadequate in terms of its design, it also suffers from the fact that many of the former enslaver nations have made reservations to the ICJ treaty – reservations that prohibit the ICJ from adjudicating crimes that they committed during the colonial era.

So let us rally around the Permanent Forum and make this happen!

The establishment of such a Special International Tribunal on Reparations will require a positive decision of the United Nations General Assembly.

Let us resolve to put in the international advocacy work that will be required to successfully deliver the creation of this critical institution at the UN General Assembly!

(2) A determined collective effort to both Preserve and Fundamentally Reform the United Nations System.

At present, the powerful imperialist nations are seemingly doing all that they possibly can to subvert, delegitimize and undermine respect for the United Nations and indeed for the very notion of an international rules-based order.

It seems as if they are determined to foster a “*might-makes-right / law of the jungle*” international order.

This, would be to our detriment, and could also prove fatal to the very continuance of the existence of our human species.

Let us therefore rally around the institution that gave birth to the **Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**, and indeed, to this **Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**.

Let us also support the ongoing effort to reform the *UN Security Council* by removing the veto power of Permanent Members, and also by establishing an African Permanent member of the Council.

(3) Full Support for the “Bridgetown Initiative” – that cutting edge, revolutionary Plan that was crafted in Bridgetown, Barbados in 2022 to fundamentally reform the inherently unjust and unequal global economic and financial order.

The “Bridgetown Initiative” – a fundamental component of the foreign policy of CARICOM – is calling for and working towards :-

- Revamping of the structures and policies of all the International Financial Institutions in order to make them more inclusive and supportive of the black and brown nations and people of the Developing World.
- A massive expansion of the financial resources available to black and brown developing countries for the financing of critical development projects and for achieving the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) !

The Bridgetown Initiative is calling for the re-channelling of **100 BILLION** in IMF Special Drawing Rights from developed countries towards developing countries and towards funding mechanisms that support developing countries.

It is also calling upon the multilateral development institutions to increase their lending for the achieving of the SDGs to **\$500 BILLION** per year.

- Instituting the practice of according developing countries no less than 25 to 30 year repayment periods on their development loans.
- The inserting of “**Debt Pause clauses**” in the debt instruments of all developing countries, such that, if the country is hit by a natural disaster it will be entitled to put its debt payments on pause for a 2-year period while it takes steps to recover from the disaster.
- A demand that the industrialized nations pay a minimum of **\$100 BILLION** per year into the **UN’s Climate Change Loss and Damage Fund** to compensate our nations for the damage that they are currently experiencing from the global warming phenomenon that they did little or nothing to create.

We must all lobby for and support these and other demands of the Bridgetown Initiative !

(4) And then there is the issue of HAITI.

The Caribbean nation of Haiti – faced with a critical existential crisis - is currently putting a new *National Unity Transitional Government* in place : a Government that – hopefully – will take Haiti on a journey towards political stability, enhanced personal safety for its people, humanitarian relief, a recommencement of national economic development, and new free and fair elections that will accord the people of Haiti the opportunity to finally elect to power the persons that they truly wish to govern their country.

The process that is currently unfolding in Haiti is very fragile, and will need all the solidarity and support of the global community and its institutions.

We must therefore all resolve to be Haiti's advocates and supporters, until the terrible historical injustice that has been inflicted on that brave and heroic country has been repaired.