



Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade
PRESS RELEASE

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**NEWLY-FORMED AFRICAN-CARICOM (AfCAR) GROUP DELIVERS
JOINT STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY & THE
TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE**

(April 6, 2021)

The CARICOM and African Group of countries made history in the United Nations today, when 68 member-countries of the two groupings delivered a joint statement as part of a new geopolitical grouping, which will be known as AfCAR (Africa Group-CARICOM). The occasion was the meeting of the UN General Assembly "to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade," which was held under the theme, "*Ending Slavery's Legacy of Racism: A Global Imperative for Justice.*"

The establishment of the AfCAR Group is an indication of the growing and deepening ties between Africa and the Caribbean on social, economic, cultural and other issues of common interest. It builds on exchange visits between various African Presidents and CARICOM Heads of Government and on their decisions to strengthen the relationship between the two regions. The opening of a CARICOM office in Nairobi, Kenya is expected to serve as a hub for multiple joint activities and deeper reach into the two regions. It is expected that AfCAR, with its 68 countries, has the potential to be a powerful group representing, advocating for and supporting CARICOM and African interests on a range of matters in the United Nations and multilateral agendas.

The AfCAR statement was delivered on behalf of the 68-member grouping by Her Excellency Ambassador Carolyn Birkett of Guyana, who noted in her

address that, “the horror of slavery separated 12 million Africans from the motherland and created a diaspora in the Caribbean. Separated from our families, now we are standing here reunited with one voice. Given this historic reality and linkage, it is indeed fitting that AfCAR’s first statement within the United Nations should come as we commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.”

“We should never cease to denounce all vestiges of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, as well as modern day slavery, while promoting the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” the Ambassador continued. The AfCAR statement also pointed to the fact that, “urgent action by governments is needed to address issues, which result in social exclusion, the perpetuation of racism, prejudice and discrimination” and lamented the fact that “none of the SDGs explicitly calls for the eradication of systemic racism and racial discrimination.”

The statement also emphasised the “importance of implementing participatory policies that are culturally relevant, free from racism and that promote equality and rights for all persons of African descent.” It underscored that “the issue of reparations is pivotal to restorative justice and to creating opportunity and equity for those whose limbs and lives were used without mercy or remuneration to build societies and strong economies” and urged member-countries of the United Nations to “take concrete steps to eliminate the scourge of racism, and act decisively to safeguard the human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

The 68 members of AfCAR pledged their “unstinting commitment of the Member States of the African Group and the Caribbean Community” in efforts by the United Nations to dismantle racism and other legacies of slavery. The sentiments expressed by AfCAR found strong resonance in the remarks made by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who observed that, “ending slavery’s legacy of racism is a global imperative for justice.”

The Secretary-General also noted that, “the impact of the slave trade remains visible in racial injustices and inequalities today.” He posited that the transatlantic slave trade, “strengthened the colonial project, enriching its multitude of beneficiaries at the expense of the lives of the enslaved.”

Secretary-General Guterres concluded that;“while the transatlantic slave trade ended over two centuries ago, the ideas that propelled it remain alive today. We must counter all lies of racial supremacy. The irrefutable fact is that we are all equally part of one race – humankind.”

Discussions, followed by efforts to put in place and formalise AfCAR, started between the CARICOM and African Caucuses to the United Nations in late 2019, but were interrupted for some months when COVID-19 brought regular UN meetings to a halt. In planning its format and structure, the Caucuses of the two regional groupings decided that the Group would be called the *African Group-CARICOM Caucus (AfCAR) Collaboration Initiative at the United Nations Headquarters in New York*. The purpose of AfCAR is broadly anchored on reinforcing the historical bonds between African and CARICOM states, based on common aspirations and the three principles of solidarity, partnership and multilateralism for the common benefit of the two regions.

AfCAR seeks to ensure a structured and coordinated approach and cooperation on issues of common interest on the agenda of the United Nations at Headquarters in New York and thus facilitate the desire of African and CARICOM Heads of State and Government and the aspirations of the peoples of the two interconnected regions. To advance the interests of the Group, the ambassadors of Botswana, His Excellency Collen Vixen Kelapile, and Grenada, Her Excellency Keisha A. McGuire were appointed as Co-Chairs and regional steering committees established. The regional steering committees comprise of, from the African Group, the ambassadors of Algeria, Botswana (co-Chair), Cameroon, Eritrea, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, and from the CARICOM Caucus, the ambassadors of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada (co-Chair), Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Now that AfCAR has made its debut within the United Nations, the Group is expected to enhance cooperation and be more active on issues of common interest.

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