

## ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL

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### **ECOSOCC hosts 2023 Global Africa People-to-People Forum; *Barbados Prime Minister reiterates determination to reverse past middle passage***

The Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) convened the 2023 Global Africa People-to-People forum on 21 July 2023. In what has become an annual event following a similar forum held in July 2022, the event was convened with support from Caribbean Pan African Network (CPAN), Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (ESCTT) and Reform Initiatives.

The Global Africa People to People Forum is an initiative that aims to bring people from diverse backgrounds and regions within Africa and the African diaspora to exchange ideas, share experiences, and foster collaboration. This year's forum was convened under the theme, "Propelling Major Pan-African Breakthroughs in 2023."

Held virtually via Zoom, the 2023 Forum advanced the collective interests of people of African heritage, while fostering strategic partnerships and promoting cross-cultural exchanges. The forum was also a platform for youth to come up with African-led solutions to the complex challenges, problems and crises confronting the African continent and its diaspora. The forum was convened to address the partnership between the African Export/Import Bank (Afreximbank) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Reparations Campaign, the First Africa-CARICOM Summit, the United Nations' Permanent Forum for People of African Descent and the issues around Haiti.

The forum had high-level participation from the Caribbean region and across Africa including, H.E Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados; H.E Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent & Grenadines; H.E Epsy Campbell Bar, Chairperson and Central America Representative of Costa Rica; Dr Carla Barnett, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General, Mr Khalid Boudali ECOSOCC Presiding Officer; Dr Kafra Kambon, Coordinator, Caribbean Pan-African Network (CPAN), Ambassador David Commissioning Chairperson of CPAN and Mr. William Carew, Head of the ECOSOC Secretariat.

H.E Mia Amor Mottley reiterated the region's determination to reverse the past middle passage and highlighted opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) in creating trade linkages and creating African led solutions especially for the youth.

"We are determined to reconnect with our African heart and outstanding Pan-Africanism. The Afrexim Bank-CARICOM relationship, among other things, is helping with that," she said.

ECOSOCC P.O Khalid Boudali called for focus on actionable solutions especially for the issues around Haiti and Africa.

"The primary aim of this forum is to elevate consciousness and motivate African youth to partake in endeavours that transform the African continent. This is a crucial platform fostering collective solutions, sustainable for years to come. Instead of just talking, let's move towards action," he advised.

Dr. Barnett, called for more teamwork between key stakeholders in the Caribbean and those in Africa.

"Let's not lose momentum on our strategic alliances between CARICOM and Africa because therein lie lessons that we can learn from each other, " she emphasised, stating that the partnership between CARICOM and Africa was making progress on some matters committed to at the first CARICOM-Africa Summit held in 2021.

H.E Epsy Campbell Barr, shared insights and lessons learnt around reparative justice and racism.

"We have engaged on the necessity of reparative justice. I make a call for everyone to join the fight against systemic racism and a similar fight to get reparative justice. Together we can make a difference and achieve a racism-free world," she said.

In his presentation, Amb. David Commissioning highlighted the role of the Caribbean Community in the rebuilding of Haiti, the incoming elective process and infrastructure rebuilding among many other issues.

In closing, ECOSOCC Head of Secretariat, William Carew said, "Let us continue working together, bridging divides and harnessing our collective strength, as we propel breakthroughs in 2023 and beyond. Together, we can build a future where people of African descent thrive, where justice and equality prevail, and where our shared heritage is celebrated and cherished."

The Global Africa People to People Forum focuses on addressing common challenges and finding innovative solutions to promote sustainable development, social cohesion, and cultural exchange among African communities worldwide. This year's forum further drew participation from youth across Africa and the Caribbean region. ECOSOCC and the Global Africa People to People Forum play significant roles in promoting inclusivity, dialogue, and cooperation among diverse stakeholders within Africa and its diaspora. These efforts contribute to shaping policies and initiatives that address the continent's various social, economic, and cultural issues while fostering a sense of unity and solidarity among its constituents.

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## **About ECOSOCC**

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established in July 2004 as an Advisory Organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States. The mandate of ECOSOCC is to contribute, through advice, to the effective translation of the objectives, principles and policies of the African Union into concrete programmes, as well as the evaluation of these programmes.

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