



REMARKS
BY
DR. CARLA BARNETT
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE SECOND AFRICA-CARICOM SUMMIT

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
7 SEPTEMBER 2025

- ❖ Your Excellency Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia.
- ❖ Your Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola and Chairperson of the African Union;
- ❖ Honourable Dr. Terrance Drew, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, and Incoming Chair of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community;
- ❖ Other Heads of State and Government of the African Union and the Caribbean Community;
- ❖ Your Excellency Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, on behalf of His Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations;
- ❖ Your Excellency Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
- ❖ Other Heads of Delegation;
- ❖ Distinguished Delegates;
- ❖ Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you very much

I will stand on the protocols already established and express my immense pleasure to be here this morning.

It is my pleasure to address you as we convene this Second CARICOM-Africa Summit at the Headquarters of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Africa-CARICOM Day 2025.

I express our deep gratitude to the Government and People of Ethiopia for their warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements in place for this Summit. Our appreciation also goes to the African Union Commission for its support and collaboration as we together prepared for this engagement.

This historic event is our first in-person gathering as the inaugural Summit in 2021 occurred virtually. I am moved by its significance as leaders from the African continent and the African diaspora, the Sixth Region of the African Union, assemble to build on the foundation of our shared history and the fraternal bonds forged by our forebears.

For the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), this Summit on the African continent represents a homecoming. For centuries our peoples were separated by an ocean, by a colonial system and by an international economic order. Nevertheless, we have remained connected through an enduring spirit and a shared heritage. This

shared heritage, informed by a horrific range of violent displacements and the ensuing struggles for freedom and self determination, has produced a vast diaspora of people of African descent, defining themselves differently, yet all looking to Africa as our historical birthplace.

This gathering is a tangible manifestation of our commitment to bridge the divide. Indeed, we are not merely building a partnership, we are reaffirming a familial bond.

The first Summit meeting generated commitments to collaborate in areas such as health, mass media, transportation, trade and investment, and in reigniting people-to-people contact.

In the years since then, CARICOM and the AU have worked to bring our Regions together. We have begun to operationalise the CARICOM-AU Memorandum of Understanding, which puts in place a supportive institutional mechanism to support the development of our partnership.

We have launched the Health Development Partnership for Africa and the Caribbean (HeDPAC), and drafted an action plan for its first year, to fulfil our shared goal of enhancing our capacity to meet health sector development needs. Yesterday, the second meeting between CARICOM and African Ministers of Health was held,

concretising the foundation for ongoing active engagement and collaboration.

Similarly, CARICOM's partnership with Afreximbank is deepening, with the establishment of its Caribbean Headquarters in Barbados and the hosting of the AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF) in four CARICOM Member States since 2022.

These initiatives address priority areas for both CARICOM and Africa, and this cooperation will contribute positively to sustainable development, and facilitate better livelihoods for our people.

Yet, there is still much more to be done.

In particular, we must explore the opportunities for joint advocacy on the reform of the international financial infrastructure, which we have grounded in the Bridgetown Initiative, and on the necessary responses to the destructive impact of climate change that is increasing vulnerabilities both in the Caribbean and on the African continent. This is a climate change that the Caribbean and Africa do not bear the responsibility for. We, together, account for approximately six percent of the global emissions that cause the global warming that fuels climate change, but we are bearing an inordinate burden of the impact.

With regard to the challenges of transportation between the Caribbean and Africa, there are initiatives that we need to work on, such as the multilateral air services agreement, and I look forward to further discussion in this regard. We have already seen positive action on the bilateral front, such as the joint venture between Antigua and Barbuda, and Nigeria for LIAT 2020 to ply routes in the Caribbean providing necessary inter-island connectivity for the movement of goods and people.

Increased trade and investment by our private sectors remain urgent and critical if our two Regions are to attain the development potential that is both necessary and possible.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is undeniable potential in the growing partnership between Africa and CARICOM. Further solidifying this partnership would stand as testament to the enormous benefits of South-South cooperation, which has become an urgent necessity given the rapid changes in the international order. It also reflects the reality of our contemporary world. Just decades ago, many of our countries fought for independence and faced great hardships in our movement for self-determination. Most are only now raising their first and second generations of people who will have no personal recollection of colonial rule. We stand today as a bloc of developing

nations determined to secure a prosperous future for our people. We recognize but are undaunted by the challenges ahead of us, for we recognise that our combined strength is a formidable asset.

The theme for this Summit, *“A Transcontinental Partnership in Pursuit of Reparatory Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations”*, is particularly timely as the international community observes the Second International Decade for People of African Descent, which began in January of this year. It is also significant that the African Union has designated 2025 as the year for "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations".

The CARICOM Reparations Commission has been at the vanguard of this movement for more than a decade, providing intellectual leadership and global advocacy on this critical issue, including engagement with African communities in Africa and in the diaspora.

This Summit notes the injustice of colonial rule and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and acknowledges that we must be unified in our demand for due compensation for the exploitative practices that traumatised and disadvantaged millions on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. I anticipate that the mechanisms which will be established to concretise collaborative work on reparations,

and the Declaration emerging from this Summit, will send a powerful and decisive message of cooperation and determination.

Heads of State and Government, Ministers, Colleagues,

This assembly is guided by the Pan-African ideals set out by iconic minds from the Caribbean and from Africa, with Marcus Garvey, Patrice Lumumba, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, and Kwame Nkrumah among them. As the Summit commences in this, the Nelson Mandela Hall here at the African Union Headquarters, a short drive from the Adwa Center, in central Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I have good reasons to feel that the outcomes of this Summit will, in the spirit of our ancestors, be an historic moment contributing to the continued deepening of CARICOM-Africa relations.

Happy Africa-CARICOM Day!

Thank you very much.

