

AU-ECOSOCC_CPAN People-To-People Webinar, Thursday, July 29, 2021
Comments from Guest Speakers and Respondents

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Guest Speakers (5):

**BANKOLE ADEOYE, Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security,
ECOSOCC**

- Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance remain at the heart of the AU's work.
- The African Diaspora is central to that work.
- Recognized Emancipation Day in the Caribbean, marking the end of chattel slavery there.
- The Constitutive Act encourages ALL of the Diaspora to participate in the building of the African Union.
- Cited W.E.B. DuBois and other historical figures from the Diaspora
- Noted the 2012 Global African Summit. "We have to sustain this dialog ... particularly where the African Diaspora is located."
- The AU has instituted a "program of regional consultative conferences as a vehicle for consultation with the various Diaspora stakeholders around the world."
- Agenda 2063 is a "game changer" as well as the UN's IDPAD
- The AU "must remain center, the home, of all Africans."
- The AU will continue to support the work of the AU and CARICOM.
- The AU seeks to work with "ALL Africans in the Diaspora."

KYERETWIE OSEI, Head of Program at ECOSOCC

- Bringing together civil society from Africa and the Caribbean to exchange issues of importance
- Places much importance on "the incorporation of the Diaspora as a key partner in the building of the AU and for ECOSOCC being the organ responsible for the integration of civil society actors ... not only for the voices of the citizenry on the continent of Africa but also our Brothers and Sisters in the Caribbean as well."
- "In the last year or so we have worked to strengthen the implementation of the Statutes of ECOSOCC which call specifically for the selection of members of the ECOSOCC General Assembly from the African Diaspora. We have involved our partners in the Caribbean and in other areas around the world as well."
- Cited the building of a "legal framework to guide the participation of the African Diaspora in the work of the AU and its organs including ECOSOCC."
- About to launch an initiative "to develop criteria to allow election of members of the ECOSOCC General Assembly as well as members of the ECOSOCC Standing Committee from the African Diaspora" that are called for in the ECOSOCC Constitution "but not operationalized yet."
- The plan is to "arrive at a set of criteria that will apply to allow us to formally bring on board formally the representation of the African Diaspora into the ECOSOCC General Assembly."
- ECOSOCC is also working on rolling out a Cultural Heritage Exchange Program with the Caribbean.

BRIAN TEMUKA KAGORO, Constitutional lawyer, Program Director for the Africa Regional Office, AU

- Recognized the Black liberation movements in the Caribbean and the Americas for their struggle for the Anti-Apartheid movement and for the uplift of African human rights and culture.
- Reiterated the need for a holistic and collaborative approach to reparations.
- The work of Caribbean intellectuals and African colleagues helped lead to the creation of Intellectual Liberated Zones.
- We are now 20 years after WCAR and more than halfway through the IDPAD.
- Cited the reparative justice movement's work to secure the aid of neo-colonialism and the return of stolen African artifacts and resources.
- Makes note of new incidents of racial injustice and White Supremacy including vaccine nationalism.
- A strong AU-CARICOM position is needed "that is united as it approaches the UN to ensure that the kind of action that will evolve for the Decade is not a mere Talk Show."

- We must remind the UN that "resolutions are insufficient to address more than 600 years of invisibilization, dehumanization and ... treatment of our people even way beyond slavery as chattel, as we have seen with the mass extrajudicial executions of Black folk, mass incarceration, whether you are in Brazil, or you are sitting in the Caribbean."

DR. HILARY BROWN, Program Manager for Culture and Community Development, CARICOM Secretariat

- Relayed regrets at not being able to attend from Sir Hillary Beckles, pioneer of the modern reparations movement in the Caribbean.
- In 2013 the CARICOM heads of government chose to pursue reparations for slavery and historic racism on behalf of the people of the Caribbean.
- This is "at the core of the contemporary reality of persistent poverty among people of African descent."
- COVID has made these inequalities much starker.
- As a consequence of the public murder of George Floyd and the resultant protests around the world, there has been a "gradual acknowledgement by governments and international corporations of how pervasive and deeply rooted racial discrimination is in every sphere of contemporary society" and an "even slower" acknowledgement of the impact of slavery and colonialism on the current state of inequality.
- The reparations movement has given new life to the global movement for human rights and social justice, sparked in large measure by the ten point platform by the leadership of the Commission and Sir Hilary Beckles, linking reparations to economic and social development and environmental and social justice.
- A stronger partnership between governments and civil society in support of reparations is needed.
- There remains significant opposition in the capitals of Europe to this work and to the dismantling of "the systems and structures of inequality and division."
- A coalition between the AU and CARICOM will be key to advancing the reparations claim.
- The AFCAR Group, formed in March 2021 in the UN, includes 68 nations together, and the Africa-Brazil-Caribbean Diaspora (ABCD) Commission was proposed in 2019 and is being implemented.
- CPAN has helped build ties to the AU and GAC has been a strong lobbying force.

DAVID COMMISSIONG, Chair of the Caribbean Pan African Network (CPAN), Barbados Ambassador to the Caribbean Community, Foundation Member of the

Clement Payne Movement of Barbados, member of the Caribbean Chapter of the International Network in Defense of Humanity, member of the Global Afrikan Congress (GAC)

- In October 2019, the Prime Minister of Barbados visited Ghana and took with her "sacred soil" from the Newton Slave Burial Ground in Barbados. That soil was interred in Ghana in a casket that bore the inscription "Let The Circle Be Unbroken". This symbolized our homecoming.
- "There is a recognition that we are family, that we are kith and kin, and that we are coming together in a very powerful way."
- We will make the 21st Century the Century of the African Renaissance, as the 20th Century was the Century of Decolonization.
- There are currently 85 nurses from Ghana working in Barbados today to assist with the COVID outbreak.
- Barbados is in the process of establishing embassies in Ghana and Kenya. Kenya's has made land available there for CARICOM to establish an embassy.
- We must make Nairobi the third powerhouse of the UN, after New York and Geneva.
- Part of the reparations campaign must be "to engage with the UN and other multilateral institutions to bring about a reparative restructuring of the international economic and political order that has its origins in those centuries of enslavement. We recognize that, to a large extent, our nations have been inserted in a structurally unequal and exploitative manner in that international economic and political order, and we intend to do something about it."
- Global Africa must come together, the Continent with the Caribbean.
- The Caribbean "had to undergo the most brutal and inhuman system of slavery known to mankind. The African people of the Caribbean resisted that evil, that brutality." African people of the Caribbean thus have great fortitude and a love for and commitment to freedom, a deep and profound understanding of White Supremacy and racism, and a commitment to combat it.
- An agreement had been made between the heads of state of Africa and the Caribbean governments to hold a Heads of State Summit in Nairobi last year to hammer out a wide-ranging Memorandum of Understanding, but it was derailed by COVID. That Summit will happen. A second Summit on reparations is needed as well.

Respondents (5):

DR. BARRYL BIEKMAN, AUADS, TIYE INTERNATIONAL

- Recognized African Diasporas in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Australia and the US, including

SRDC

- This meeting represents "a new milestone in the sense of Recognition, Justice and Development referenced to Article 3 of the African Union Constitutive Act ... and the May 2012 African Union African Diaspora Declaration."
- In Europe, unlike the Caribbean, "we don't have African governments who can take care for our business in agreement with the African Union."
- Thus, the 20 elected representative seats in ECOSOCC became very important to Diaspora communities, especially those outside the jurisdiction of CPAN.
- The agreement recognizing Brazil is a good thing, and it is good that Mr. Osei has noted the need to develop the legal framework for the 20 ECOSOCC seats.
- The February 2022 AU Summit needs to take up resolutions on reparations in the spirit of the Abuja, Libya and Gambia resolutions on reparations and apology.
- Diaspora civil society must have a place in these deliberations.
- The Accra Decade of Return Declaration should be brought to ECOSOCC for inclusion at the next AU Summit.
- Many African diplomats seem surprisingly unaware of the resolutions, declarations and policies regarding the AU Sixth Region. They concentrate on the "Modern" Diaspora, Continental Africans, and ignore the "Historic" Diaspora, descendants of the stolen and kidnapped Africans of the Maafa.
- Some kind of Diaspora Proof Mechanism may be needed, backed up and promoted with slogans that could remind diplomats and other officials about the entire African Diaspora.
- We've been waiting over 10 years for our work to be recognized and acted upon.
- Reparative justice and anti-racism must be stressed. African governments should be able to respond effectively to acts of racism and discrimination committed against African Diasporas.

CIKIAH THOMAS, Chair of the Global Afrikan Congress (GAC)

- There has been a "people-to-people" relationship between the Caribbean Diaspora and African people on the Continent. Perhaps the governments have been disconnected from the people of the Diaspora.
- Pharmaceutical research on medical issues in Africa has been lacking.
- There are too many refugees, especially from Nigeria and Ethiopia, coming to Canada because of COVID.

- There are four critical areas GAC has identified: (1) Climate change; (2) Health care; (3) Reparations; and (4) Sovereignty and security.
- We know CARICOM is ready but it doesn't seem that the AU is. There is not enough agitation at the UN by AU officials to hold Europe accountable for its acts against Africa and African people in the Diaspora.
- Our spirits and our souls have never left Africa.
- Too many skilled and talented people are leaving Africa for Europe and the Americas.
- There is a huge knowledge gap on the Continent about reparations. GAC has academics ready to go to Africa "tomorrow" to instruct on reparations and help drive this agenda.

STEVE REID, Project Analyst, Caribbean Rastafari Organization

- Recognizes Emancipation Day and the commemorations being held in the Caribbean.
- States appreciation to CPAN and the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as ECOSOCC for their participation in the event.
- "Reparations and Rastafari go hand in hand", being involved in reparations work since the 1950's.
- Settlement in Africa is important to Rastafari. Forming relationships with people on the African Continent is essential to this goal.
- One objective is to build a Rastafari Global Secretariat "to look at the issues in a very formal way and achieve equal rights and justice for all communities."
- The creation of the South Africa-based Rastafari United Front in 2016 was a welcome event. Met with them in Jamaica, followed by further meetings in Ethiopia and Ghana with the Rastafari Continental Council in 2018. Formal relationships with global Rastafari groups and the Rastafari Continental Council were signed in June 2019, including information sharing and future joint projects.
- They look forward to participating on the CARICOM Reparations Commission. They assisted in building the CARICOM Ten Point Plan and look forward to more cooperation in the future.
- The Web site reparationsforsolidarity.net has information on the project Reparations for Settlement in Africa. Reparations capital must be used to settle Diasporas in Africa and create institutions to assist in business development.
- This is not only for Rastafari but for anyone who wishes to settle back home in Africa.

DANIELLE FREDERICK, Director of the Institute for Indigenous Knowledge, Empowerment and Research

- Agrees with Cikiah Thomas on everything he said except his assertion that there was a lack of passion from African officials. It is not a lack of passion but how we frame the issue of reparations as a function of past practices. The institutions still remain, they determine policies for African and Caribbean governments and this "hinders us as a people from really and truly self-determining in the way that we should to benefit our greater community." Current practices continue to contribute to our dehumanization.
- We must change the discussion on reparations from a focus on past practices and bring it forward into a contemporary setting and acknowledge that "those institutions still remain, just in evolved settings." WTO, IMF, UN Security Council, all set up by the historic enslavers. "So, what has changed?" Our current discussion doesn't acknowledge the continuation of those brutalities from the past. Therefore, Diasporas and Caribbean governments are "hamstrung by the same elements that have brought us to the table demanding reparations."
- "The language of reparations is very cordial, very respectful, asking them to acknowledge our humanity, and I am always perplexed by this ... but the persons who are most impacted ... by the lack of reparations and the lack of policies that address the disenfranchisement of a whole host of Black and African people on the Continent and in the Diaspora are ... very rarely present at the table when these policies are being formulated. In fact, we are usually shut out and removed from the conversation when the policies are being created, and are only invited to the table when the framework and the parameters have already been established and the wiggle room is almost nonexistent." We must begin to call out this behavior when we see it.
- The UN tends to fund projects that will benefit the Global North. We must demand countries who sign on to IDPAD initiatives are not just making symbolic gestures. They need to address issues from a policy and systemic point of view.
- Too often they concentrate only on economics and ignore environmental impact. The result is flooding, famines and heat waves that the Global North does not feel and as a result does not notice or acknowledge.
- The WCAR was 20 years ago. Yet little has changed; little to no progress on policy initiatives discussed at WCAR. We need to talk about dismantling the systems that keep putting us in places where we are constantly asking for our humanity to be acknowledged in the pursuit of reparative justice.
- We champion reparations internationally, but we in the Caribbean must recognize that "we owe a cross-section of our people reparations for post-colonial violence that was perpetrated on them, namely, the Rastafari Community." They have "borne the brunt of anti-Blackness." Jamaica has put in motion some reparative measures but still discriminates against Rastafari

because of their hair and culture. Symbolic gestures while policies continue to do harm. "While we lobby for international recognition of our humanity, we also have to acknowledge our role in dehumanizing our fellow Brothers and Sisters."

MWALIMU MUTEMI WA KIAMA, Social Entrepreneur, Nairobi Kenya and Tanzania

- Part of the Africa-Caribbean Forum. Currently in Arisha, Tanzania with the Coordinated Collective of the Africans Rising Movement for Justice, Peace and Dignity.
- Guided and informed by an August 2016 Arusha declaration, the Kilimanjaro Declaration.
- The prevailing narrative of "Africa Rising" places too much emphasis on "infrastructure, roads, buildings and shiny things" while the people of Africa are still "suffering across the planet." Thus, Africans (The People) Rising.
- The "inability of our States to do anything about the plight of the people" has been discussed here today. "They are not capable of doing anything about it because a lot of these States were created by the colonialists. In the Continent, most of these States were created in 1885 in the Berlin Conference. And when many of these States gained their independence 60 or so years ago, we retained the same divisions. So I don't know what you got independence for (if you don't) change the colonial borders. And we raised armies against each other."
- Our work with Africans Rising is to start on deconstructing those borders, mental and physical.
- The elites who rule our States are mostly educated by the colonialists.
- The best way to defeat these colonialists who divided us is to unite and build a People's Movement.
- We will be reaching out to all of the movements that represent Africans and African struggles.
- We must come together and develop programs that push our power.
- It has been said by our mentors that "Africa is the richest continent below the ground, but it's also the poorest continent above the ground. That poverty is deliberate. It's perpetuated by our former colonialists. How are we going to overcome that?"
- "Even as State institutions and organizations like the AU do their work, the people of Africa must also build their movements and use their power to pressure the governments to address the issues, and if they don't, then we change the governments."