

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL

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ECOSOCC advocates for continued interaction and partnerships, as well as strengthened solidarity, between Africans and African diasporas

The African Union Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) has urged Africans on the African continent and Africans of African descent in the diaspora to continue engaging with one another, with a particular emphasis on encouraging increased diaspora engagement with the African Union's development agenda.

This call to action was a recurring theme during the Global Africa People to People Forum (GAPPF), which was held by ECOSOCC in collaboration with the Caribbean Pan African Network (CPAN), the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (ESCTT), and the Africa Transitional Justice Legacy Fund (ATJLF) and African Civil Society Organisations.

Officially opening the Forum, the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves emphasized that the 55 African nations and the 14 independent countries within CARICOM constituted a significant block that should be leveraged.

He highlighted the need for a permanent "ABCD" commission for Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, and the Diaspora as they were home to the greatest number of Africans and people of African descent. In light of this, H.E. Gonsalves underlined the vital need to address reparations for native genocide and African enslavement.

"Most importantly, we must frame our discussions as a union of African and Caribbean civilizations, with the union taking practical form in the form of cooperation and shared pan-Africanism in this contemporary period," he said.

Mr. William Carew, Head of the ECOSOCC Secretariat, stressed the critical importance of using the GAPPF to start debating critical issues affecting the continent and to explore potential solutions to such crises in his opening remarks. Further, he asserted that the legal frameworks to guide diaspora engagement with the African continent were already in place to ensure full and meaningful participation of the diaspora in the African Union's programmes and processes.

"This engagement between ECOSOCC, the diaspora, and the AU as a whole is institutionalised, and it will contribute to all parties' development agendas while also making a difference in the lives of people of African descent and African people," he said.

In line with the African Union's theme for the year, the Global Africa People to People Forum was held at an opportune time to increase diaspora engagement in achieving the goals of the 2022 AU Theme on "Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent," as well as the potential for collaboration between the two regions in light of Caribbean Community's (CARICOM's) ongoing development agenda, which prioritises food security and agriculture.

Dr. Chenzira Kahina, Executive Committee Member of the Caribbean Pan African Network (CPAN), acknowledged the long-standing relationship between CPAN and ECOSOCC, which has fed into methods and mechanisms that helped facilitate how the Caribbean region engages with the African continent, through various networks, interpersonal relationships, and strong socio-economic relationships with the AU and other stakeholders.

Mr. Khafra Kambon, Director of International and Pan African Affairs of the Emancipation Support Committee, Trinidad and Tobago, said the forum represented efforts to bring all fragments of the shattered historical evolution back together with the global gathering of African people, indicating that the act signified building a greater consciousness of pride in the people's common identity, and recognition of common destiny.

Mr. Sabelo Mbokazi, Head of Division, Labour, Employment, and Migration of the African Union Commission, echoed the sentiments expressed by the panel of speakers, reiterating the AU's vision of an integrated prosperous and peaceful Africa with a vision which depicts an acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of the globe and regions.

"The future of Africa is hinged on partnerships and people-to-people engagements, which is why we believe this forum was established, but it also happens in an era where the importance of partnerships has been underscored, particularly as it was exacerbated at the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic," he said.

The Global Africa People to People Forum seeks to provide a long-term opportunity for African civil society and those in the diaspora to explore their civil rights, as well as to foster mutual relationships with the diaspora on issues concerning the advancement of the African continent and CARICOM.

More specifically, it is meant to strengthen and expand civil society engagement in anticipation of the proposed AU-CARICOM Summit, which is set to take place annually on September 7th (African-Caribbean Day) as a follow-up to the decisions made at the first AU-CARICOM Summit on September 7th, 2021.

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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.

Learn more at: <https://ecosocc.au.int>

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