

**Statement delivered by
H.E. Ms. Patricia Hermanns, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of The
Bahamas to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva**

on behalf of the CARICOM Group in Geneva

at the

First Session of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent

*Theme: Strategies to combat systemic racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and
related intolerance*

Monday, 5 December 2022

Chairperson,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member-States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) represented in Geneva.

At the outset, the CARICOM Group wishes to congratulate the Members of the Permanent Forum on their appointments, including two Members from our own subregion. We welcome the long-anticipated operationalization of the Forum, as well as the timely convening of this first Session and call for all efforts to be undertaken to ensure that this process is appropriately resourced, going forward.

We also express our support for the very pertinent and topical themes that are to be addressed during the thematic discussions over these next few days, and look forward to engaging further on these issues.

In our view, the Permanent Forum offers new impetus to our collective efforts towards a truly transformative agenda to address the past and current impacts of systemic racism. Indeed, the legacy of historical injustice committed against People of African Descent permeates our contemporary realities, resulting in inequalities in access to health and social services, in access to quality education and decent work as well as inequalities in the international economic and

Speaking time allocated: 2 minutes / approx. 260 words

trading system. This often results in unequal outcomes such as higher rates of chronic diseases, and higher exposure to violence and discrimination. Crises at the global level such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change only compound these challenges.

We hope, however, that the Forum will also contribute to a strengthened acknowledgement of the significant contributions made by People of African Descent to political, economic, social and cultural development at the global level.

For CARICOM States, the legacy of slavery remains one of the darkest periods of our history and one of the greatest examples of human cruelty. Moreover, we are mindful that, while there has been the burgeoning of efforts towards reconciliation and redress, much more needs to be done to truly balance the scales of justice. It is for this reason that CARICOM, through the standing Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Reparations in CARICOM, has developed its Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice, in which reparation is defined as an economic and social development strategy for the region.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the international community resolved to “leave no one behind”. However, the rise of racist and xenophobic rhetoric have shown that we have much work to do in order to achieve full equality where all people, including People of African Descent, can both contribute to and benefit from the results of our collective human progress. CARICOM commits to working constructively with the Forum and the international community towards these important ends.

I thank you.