

**Trinidad and Tobago Statement at the General Debate of 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 05 December 2022

Thank you, Chair, for the floor.

Trinidad and Tobago aligns with the statement delivered by Ambassador Hermanns of The Bahamas on behalf of the CARICOM Group.

We join others in welcoming the operationalisation of this Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. We also congratulate the Members of the Forum on their appointments and extend our thanks to them, both for their advocacy to date in respect of the challenges facing people of African descent and for offering themselves to continue their work in the context of this particular mechanism. We are also particularly pleased that two Members of the Panel are from the Caribbean Community and we commend them for their contributions.

Chair, we anticipate that the operationalisation of this Forum will bring greater focus, coherence and momentum to efforts to examine and address the intersecting challenges of systemic racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by People of African Descent. The emphasis for this First Session on strategic approaches points to the imperative to be practical and to keenness to engage robustly to secure tangible meaningful outcomes.

The injustice of the past cannot be ignored, downplayed or erased, especially as historical injustice continues to have multiple repercussions and, in fact, the legacy of such injustice continues to manifest itself in myriad ways today. In this regard, we consider the topics identified for the thematic discussions very pertinent, especially the elements relating to climate justice and reparatory justice.

On the latter, Chair, we echo our previous calls for reparatory justice for the unpaid debt for centuries of enslavement of African people. CARICOM's Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice is pertinent in this regard, not least of all its elements relating to debt cancellation, technology transfer and public health.

In closing, Chair, and even as we consider the ways in which the global context of intersecting crises poses a real threat to the achievement of multiple SDGs, I take this opportunity to applaud this consultative mechanism, established with the aim of improving the safety, quality of life and livelihoods of people of African Descent. Trinidad and Tobago commits to contributing and collaborating to this end.

I thank you.