

Under Invested The Caribbean-African Relationship

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THINK • STIMULATE • BRIDGE

Under Invested The Caribbean-African Relationship

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Summary

Caribbean and African ties run deep. They are based on a shared history, culture, and sense of a common identity forged by the slave trade which forcibly relocated more than 10 million Africans to the New World, in the process, creating large centres of African Diaspora in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The common historical experiences of slavery and colonialism inspired formation of the Pan-African Movement in the first half of the 1900's led by the African Diaspora outside of Africa. Organized around an agenda of de-colonialization and racial equality, spanning several decades, this early period marked the most rich, vibrant and dynamic period in African-Caribbean relations with both groups united around a common agenda. Today, while Africa and the Caribbean engage through multiple points of contact and in different fora, the relationship seems to have lost its lustre and drive. This paper argues that the future of Caribbean-African relations is one ripe with potential and promise, but it requires concerted investments of time, attention and political will to systematically transform the relationship into a political, social and economic force, fit for purpose and suitable for these modern times.

UNDER INVESTED

The Africa-Caribbean Relationship

1. A Relationship Deeply Rooted

The ties between Africa and the Caribbean run deep. They are based on a shared history and culture, and sense of a common identity. Starting in 1502, the triangular slave trade¹ resulted in the forcible removal of more than 10 million Africans from Africa to the New World, for use as vital cogs in a new model of development and global trade based on the categorization of slaves as ‘chattel,’ and the use of their labour on agricultural plantations. Over the ensuing four hundred years, the slave trade contributed to the creation of large centres of African diaspora in the Caribbean, Latin America, the USA and Europe.

The phenomena of the slave trade also informed the development of a field of economics around the study of the plantation economy as an integrated economic system with inputs from a range of economic, social and political variables. At the core of this model was the use of labour, first slave, then indentured labourers² followed by landless peasant farmers which gave rise to a peculiar state of underdevelopment³ in the Caribbean and elsewhere, and a population of mixed heritage claiming African, Indian, Chinese and European ancestry.

Of a population of approximately thirty-nine million in the Caribbean, it is estimated that as many as seventy-three percent have an Afro-Caribbean identity, descendants of captured Africans sold into slavery.⁴ In countries such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, populations are almost equally divided between those of African and Indian descent, making associations based on race and ethnicity particular features of the political landscape in those countries.

Much has been written about early ties which bound Africans and their Caribbean descendants to each other and the historical legacy embedded in the pursuit of common interests, most notably those related to civil rights, the process of decolonization and an end to apartheid. Solidarity between the two groups was a hallmark of their relations.

1. The triangular slave trade involved the movement of slaves from West Africa to the Caribbean and parts of South America, the USA and Europe and the transportation of goods fashioned with slave labour back to the major cities of the colonial powers of the day.

2. Indentured labourers and servants were brought to the Caribbean to substitute for slave labour. These came mainly from India but also Hong Kong and China when slavery was officially abolished by the British in the Caribbean in 1807, though the practice did not end until August 1, 1834. The first ships left India for the sugar plantations in the Caribbean from Calcutta, in 1838 arriving in Guyana in May that year. <http://www.guyana.org/features/guyanastory/chapter50.html>.

3. One of the more widely used definitions of under-development was used by Walter Rodney in his book on the exploitation of Africa (How Europe Under-Developed Africa 1972) to denote both a process of exploitation and colonialization, as well as to describe a particular state and condition of human development and well being.

4. <http://www.guyana.org/features/guyanastory/chapter50.html>.

Today, both groups engage with each other through multiple points of contact as members of various multilateral fora with overlapping membership. Such fora include the United Nation's (UN) Grouping of the G77+China, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of countries (ACP), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), among others. Regionally they cooperate through the mechanisms of the African Union (AU) and the English-speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM), as well as bilaterally, through diplomatic relations and associated memoranda.

Despite these multiple points of interaction and contact, or perhaps because of these, the relationship between Africa and the Caribbean has become more diffuse, more filtered and less certain. The historical achievements won through joint efforts, instead of leading to greater and more significant engagement have failed to do so, and today the relationship is one which has lost its lustre and drive. While emotional ties are still in evidence, the solidarity between the two regions, so long a hallmark of their relationship, no longer occupies the prominence it once commanded. As economies and societies on both sides of the Atlantic continue to modernize and change, and as the world order continues to evolve with China rising as a new potential hegemonic power,⁵ so too have Caribbean and African interests and strategic alliances evolved, in the process becoming more diverse and complex.

Given their increasing economic and political weight, however, particularly that of Africa, and the scholarship for which both regions are renowned, (tiny St Lucia, for example, with a population of one hundred and eighty-five thousand, is the birthplace of two of the Caribbean's three Nobel Laureates),⁶ there is need to reset relations and articulate an ambitious agenda based on mutual interests and the development of both Africa and the Caribbean. It would be in the interests of both groups to do so.

2. Early Struggles: Decolonialization, Apartheid & Civil Rights

The common historical experience of slavery and the yoke of colonialism provided the rallying call for the formation of the Pan-African Movement (PAM) which developed and took shape in the first half of the 1900's led by the African Diaspora outside of Africa, and centred in the cities of the great colonial powers of the time, France and Britain.⁷ Organized around an agenda of de-colonialization and racial equality, spanning several decades, this early period marked the most rich, vibrant and dynamic period in African-Caribbean relations with unity around a common agenda.⁸

The seeds of PAM were sown in 1897 by the establishment of the African Association in London which became associated with pressing for decolonialization of the West Indies and Africa, and the demand for equality of civil rights and economic opportunity.⁹ A Trinidadian, Henry Williams, has been credited with coining the term 'Pan-African' and with organizing the first Pan African conference in Westminster's Town Hall, in London, on 23 July, 1900.¹⁰ In attendance were members of the Diaspora from America, including W.E.B. Du Bois who later became one of the founders of the National

5. Ishmael, Len. *Soft Power & Global Ambition. China's Growing Reach in Europe.* Fletcher Forum World Affairs, Vol 43. Winter 2019.

6. St Lucia is the birthplace of two Nobel Laureates : Sir Arthur Lewis for Economics in 1979, and Derek Walcott for Literature in 1992

7. Adi, Hakim and Marika Sherwood. 2003. *Pan-African History. Political figures from Africa & the Diaspora since 1787.* London. Routledge

8. Despite the size of their numbers, the Caribbean diaspora - English, French, Dutch and Spanish speaking – both in the region as well as elsewhere, played an important role in contributing to the struggle against colonialism and racism in a manner which is known to have commanded the respect of people of Africa. <http://www.dirco.gov.za/diaspora/docs/latestlayoutofdiaspora2005.pdf>.

9. <https://www.padeap.net/the-history-of-pan-africanism>.

10. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Pan-African_Conference

Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) in 1909.¹¹

Before 1945, many of the Caribbean and African activists associated with the movement were students or workers living in the cities of Europe.¹² These cities, Paris, London, Manchester and others, became natural hubs for the exchange of ideas, discourse, radical political thought and exploration of Socialist, Marxist and Communist ideology. PAM members were also strengthened by members of the early communist party in Britain and the USA, such as Peter Fryer, the British journalist and author of the book *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*.¹³

Included in the group of early activists was the Caribbean's Aime Cesaire from Martinique,¹⁴ and others from Africa including Ladipo Solanke, Nathaniel Fadipe and Harold Moody.¹⁵ Across the Atlantic, George Padmore of Trinidad and Marcus Garvey of Jamaica championed the cause of people of African descent in the USA and advocated for the process of decolonization in Africa and the Caribbean. African leaders including Julius Nyerere, Haile Selassie, Ahmed Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah¹⁶ Thomas Sankara, Nelson Mandela and Muammar Gaddafi¹⁷ all championed the rights of Africans and an end to colonial rule. Caribbean leaders were also involved in this struggle, the earliest of whom was Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the Emperor of Haiti, who led the slave rebellion that would establish the world's first independent State of African descendants, on January 1, 1804.¹⁸

The struggle for independence and racial equality was vividly chronicled in the works of notable scholars from the Caribbean including Walter Rodney of Guyana. His books, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and *Grounding with My Brothers*, published at the height of the Black Power Movement of the late 1960's and 1970's¹⁹ bore witness to the mood of the times, becoming critical references of the exploitation of Africa by colonial regimes of Europe as well as providing testimony to the solidarity between Africa and the Caribbean. Trinidad's CLR James, George Lamming of Barbados (*Castle of My Skin*), Derek Walcott of St Lucia, Martinique's Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth; Black Skin, White Masks*) were all Pan Africanists, engaged in the 'radical' political discourse of liberation and equality, documenting their thinking and experiences in their written texts and books of prose.

The Caribbean established its first regional University, the University of the West Indies (UWI), in Jamaica, in 1948. UWI became a centre for tertiary learning and progressive political thinking and

11. Ibid

12. Adi, Hakim and Marika Sherwood. 2003. *Pan-African History. Political figures from Africa & the Diaspora since 1787*. London. Routledge

13. Ibid. The author Peter Fryer chronicles an incident of special significance to the Caribbean in his documentation of the disembarkation of 'the MV Empire Windrush' in 1948, with "five hundred pairs of willing hands from Jamaica", marking the commencement of mass migration to Britain. Persons who arrived in the UK by this means were dubbed the Windrush generation. Several, including their descendants, were victims of a political scandal in Britain in 2018, with thousands threatened with deportation and close to 100 persons wrongly deported, despite living and working in the UK for decades, in a shocking denial of their legal rights. Hodge, Mark. *Windrush Scandal*. The Sun. August 22 2018. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thesun.co.uk/news/6064892/windrush-generation-scandal-when-children-arrive-uk-landing-cards-corbbyn-rudd-compensation/amp/>

14. Aimé Césaire was one of the founders of the Negritude Movement in the Francophone regions.

15. Adi, Hakim and Marika Sherwood. 2003. *Pan-African History. Political figures from Africa & the Diaspora since 1787*. London. Routledge.

16. Several of these political leaders were also accomplished writers and scholars in their own right including Kwame Nkrumah (*Neo-Colonialism The last Stage of Imperialism*) and Trinidad and Tobago's Eric Williams (*Capitalism and Slavery 1965*).

17. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Africanism>

18. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.biography.com/amp/political-figure/jeanjacques-dessalines>

19. The Black Power Movement which swept across American and Canadian cities was a political and social movement whose champions advocated racial pride and self-sufficiency. The Americans Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Willie Ricks (Mukasa Dada) were early users of the term – Black Power – as a political slogan. <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power>.

discourse. Economics professors George Beckford and Norman Girvan²⁰ of Jamaica, and their colleagues in the Political Sciences Department, infused young Caribbean students with an understanding of their history through lectures on the slave trade and the plantation economy as a model of economic organization.

For many students the period of the late 1950's through the 1970's would represent their first heady incursion into conscious political thinking and exploration of the impacts of slavery, colonialism and racial inequality in their own societies. Years later, many of them would return to their native islands as the first generation of Caribbean leaders armed with tertiary degrees, putting these to work in furtherance of the goals of independence and equity. Leaders such as Jamaica's Michael Manley pushed the boundaries of newly won independence by seeking to loosen the grip of the former colonial powers and their multi-national corporations on the resources of these new states to increase the revenues available for nation building.

The spirit of consciousness and resistance was also captured in the tapestries of Caribbean dance, theatre, music and other expressions of the region's culture. The Rastafari movement, established in Jamaica in the 1930's was one such expression, combining attributes of both religious and social elements as an expression of resistance to imperialism and a celebration of African culture and roots.²¹ Jamaica's Bob Marley has emerged as perhaps the most celebrated symbol of the Rastafari movement, with his songs of resistance and solidarity commanding cult-like fervour among the Diaspora, as well as in Africa and beyond. Indeed, Bob Nestor Marley is reputed to have been the only outsider to have been invited to celebrate the birth of Zimbabwe as a new state. Today his statue in Rufaro Stadium, Mbare township, commemorates both the moment and the venue where his concert to mark independence was held.²²

The Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, the struggle for independence and an end to apartheid, all sprung from the same well and were mutually reinforcing. Ultimately, PAM's Atlantic Charter resulted in unifying responses to colonialism not only in Africa and the Caribbean but also in Asia.²³ The 5th Pan African Conference which convened in Manchester in 1945 presented the case for the linking of independence in Africa with that of other colonized people thereby establishing the early foundations for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) with a membership which would grow to one hundred and twenty-five countries, and several observers by 2018.²⁴

After 1945, the centre of PAM's activities moved to Africa propelled by several events, not least of which was Kwame Nkrumah's success in pushing for the end of British colonial rule and establishing Ghana as Africa's first independent country in 1957, second only to Haiti as an independent black country.²⁵ PAM's activities and the push towards independence also laid the foundations for the establishment of the Organization of African Unity and the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994.²⁶

20. Professor Norman Girvan was a colleague of Guyana's Walter Rodney both of whom were classmates in the study group founded by C.L.R. James in London in the 1960's. <https://www.caribbeanintelligence.com/content/norman-girvan-pragmatic-economist>.

21. Hall, Tim. Rastafarianism: Origins and Beliefs. The Telegraph. April 12, 2007. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1548384/Rastafarianism-Origins-and-beliefs.html>

22. Hans, Thobile. Remembering Bob Marley at the birth of Zimbabwe. Forbes International. April 2, 2015. <https://forbes.com/sites/forbesinternational/2015/04/02/remembering-bob-marley-at-the-birth-of-zimbabwe/amp/>

23. <https://www.padeap.net/the-history-of-pan-africanism>.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Adi, Hakim and Marika Sherwood. 2003. Pan-African History. Political figures from Africa & the Diaspora since 1787. London. Routledge

The spirit of Pan-Africanism on the continent of Africa and the lure of ‘Mother Africa’ became a beacon to which several members of the African diaspora from the Caribbean as well as the USA were drawn, spending their last days, not in place of their birth, but finally back in Africa, the ancestral home.

3. Cooperation in Modern Multi-Lateral & Regional Frameworks

Today, African-Caribbean relations are conducted via an array of different groupings and configurations operating within the structures of multilateral organizations as well as at the regional and national levels. At the multilateral level, cooperation takes place on an agenda of mutual but not exclusive interest to the two regions. A brief review of the most important of these configurations and associated fora are discussed in the following sections.

3.1 The Non-Aligned Movement

African and Caribbean countries joined others as members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) with the group’s first Summit held in Serbia, in 1961, hosted by Yugoslavia’s President Josip Broz Tito.²⁷ NAM’s objectives were organized around an agenda of solidarity in pursuit of independence, and also neutrality in the two bloc-world and Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union.²⁸

Apart from Tito, the other foundational fathers included Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, India’s Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesia’s Sukarno.²⁹ NAM provided for one of the earliest examples of South-South cooperation, providing the framework within which China, one of the world’s poorest countries at the time, proved the financial and human resources to build Tanzania’s first railroad in 1972.³⁰

With the end of the Cold War and the gaining of independence, the political imperative of NAM as a framework which engages both Africa and the Caribbean seems passé.³¹ The Movement is not as dynamic as it once was, and seems to have been supplanted by other more modern constructs such as the G77+China.³²

3.2 The United Nations: G77+ China

The G77+China established in June 1964, represents one hundred and thirty-four developing countries in a grouping established at the United Nations as a modality for cooperation as well as a mechanism for negotiations. While African and Caribbean countries represent more than half of the membership of the G77+China, China and India maintain strong presence in the group. Representing seventy-five percent of the UN membership, and eighty percent of the world’s population, members of

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. The President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere made the case for the building of the railroad to the USA, World Bank and Europe and was turned down. He turned to Chairman Mao asking for support. Despite the poverty of his own country, in the spirit of solidarity, the Chairman obliged. Yuan, Sun Irene, Jayaram Kartik, Kassiri Omid. *Dance of the Lions and Dragons: How are Africa and China Engaging, and how will the partnership evolve?* McKinsey Global Institute, 2017.

31. <https://www.thenational.ae/non-aligned-movement-summits-no-longer-serve-a-purpose-1.410737>

32. Ibid

the G77+ China also collaborate on matters which advance South-South cooperation.³³ The grouping is credited with playing a significant role in UN actions which have resulted in Agenda 2030 and the SDG's, as well as the Addis Abba Action Plan among other global action plans.³⁴

3.3 The African, Caribbean Pacific Group of Countries (ACP)

Perhaps the most important multilateral framework for the purpose of direct African-Caribbean engagement is that of the ACP. The latter provides the institutional mechanism for both regions to work on an agenda jointly defined with the Pacific, in the ACP relationship with the European Union (EU).³⁵ The ACP also provides the space for joint African-Caribbean actions as part of the Intra - ACP mechanism.

The ACP was established by the Georgetown Agreement in 1975 to provide institutional support to ACP - EU relations set out in the Lomé Partnership Agreement which came into force in the same year. The Georgetown Agreement, signed in the capital city of Guyana, has guided implementation of successor agreements such as the current Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CTA) which will end in 2020. Negotiations on a successor agreement to guide relations post Cotonou were launched on September 28th 2018 and are slated to conclude by October 2019 though some slippage in dates is expected and transitional arrangements are being discussed.

The ACP Secretariat provides an important role as the institutional forum coordinating both the intra-ACP activities of the seventy-nine-member countries as well as the relationship, as a single bloc of developing countries, with the European Union. As one of the largest grouping of developing countries outside of the United Nations the ACP group has the potential to leverage these numbers to produce significant political weight in different fora, but that leverage remains to be fully exploited.

In the process of preparing for a successor agreement to Cotonou, a number of evaluations pertaining to elements of the current arrangements have been undertaken by both the EU and the ACP. Among ACP member states there is general agreement that while attention has been placed on the EU-ACP relationship, comparable efforts have not been expended on intra-ACP relations to the detriment of the solidarity within the group and certainly between Africa and the Caribbean which was evident over 44 years ago, when the Georgetown agreement was signed.

In many ways, the ACP as a forum for joint engagement seems to have lost its earlier appeal. ACP Ambassadors in Brussels note the difficulty in getting their capitals to focus on matters pertaining to the ACP agenda. While summits of ACP Heads of Government and State have been woefully sparse in their attendance, EU-AU Summits and those between EU and Caribbean leaders usually draw full attendance.

The African Union's declaration of March 2018 in Kigali of its intention to negotiate post Cotonou arrangements on behalf of Africa in an AU-EU configuration, outside of the ACP framework, was met with deep disquiet within the ACP group given the implications for the viability of the ACP

33. <https://www.g77.org/doc>

34. Ibid

35. The Caribbean and the Pacific both fall into the category of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and collaborate on the UN SIDS agenda as members of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS). Some SIDS such as Cape Verde, are classified as African SIDS.

configuration without its most important, and substantive pillar, Africa. This announcement should have come as no surprise. Not only has support for the ACP among its own membership and within EU member states seemed to have been on the downturn in more recent times, the EU had also made no secret of the importance of its growing relationship with Africa, one which was heightened following the 2015 ‘refugee crisis’ prompting Europe to consider African migration through the prism of its own security concerns. Outside of the immediate concerns regarding the long-term viability of the ACP as an institution, there was a sense of disquiet, within the Caribbean, of having been cut adrift by Africa and the implications of having to negotiate with the EU with reduced leverage.

On this note it would be fair to say that within the ACP, both the Caribbean and the African regions from time to time have had reason to complain that the solidarity expected from each other with respect of their own regional priorities and concerns, has not always been forthcoming. With the AU having withdrawn its earlier determination to negotiate with the EU on its own terms, the two regions are collaborating with respect of negotiating future system-wide arrangements for the ACP relationship with Europe. However, in many ways, the boost which the ACP framework was expected to provide by way of supporting increased traffic in ideas, projects, joint ventures, investments, business developments and other exchanges between Africa and the Caribbean has failed to materialize. This failure is not only institutional; it is also one in which the membership on both sides are equally culpable.

3.4 The Commonwealth

African and Caribbean countries comprise almost two-thirds of the total membership of the Commonwealth, an organization bringing together a number of former British colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and the Pacific. While Heads of government meet every two years at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), there is little to suggest that African and Caribbean countries use this as a forum in which to engage in joint action. More to the point however, is the fact that the Commonwealth’s utility as a political forum of importance has diminished over time, though there is evidence to suggest that Brexit³⁶ is being used as a call to engineer a more robust role for the Commonwealth as a political forum.³⁷

Much will depend on the nature of the future relationship which is negotiated between Europe and the United Kingdom (UK) once the process of Article 50 runs its course.³⁸ African and Caribbean countries already have mechanisms for structured bilateral and regional engagements with Europe, and those who are members of the ACP also have another forum for engagement. Brexit will, however, have implications for the EU budget, and the absence of the UK’s voice in advocating or supporting African and Caribbean interests in a post Brexit EU, might be missed by some, though there is also the view that the advocacy role which was expected from the UK, from the Caribbean perspective, was not necessarily always forthcoming.

36. Brexit is the term associated with the UK’s withdrawal of its membership in the European Union.

37. The author was invited as an expert witness to the House of Lords, Westminster, in November 2017 to provide testimony regarding how the Commonwealth could assist developing countries within its membership to trade out of poverty, post Brexit.

38. Article 50 is the relevant clause within the Treaty of Maastricht which sets out the terms and conditions for withdrawal of membership from the European Union.

3.5 The WTO

For all developing countries, the World Trade Organization is an important multilateral forum within which to ensure trade rules are applied with consistency, and arbitral and mediation processes conducted fairly, regardless of the size or wealth of the country against whom counter measures are being sought. African and Caribbean economies represent one third of the WTO membership. They collaborated with other developing countries in ensuring that the DOHA Round³⁹ was one which recognized trade as a tool of development.

The regions also collaborate in several of the WTO groupings in preparation for negotiations, including the small and vulnerable economies (SVEs) group. The viability of the WTO however is under threat by some of its wealthier members. As more countries seek mega regional trade deals with higher levels of ambition outside the framework of the WTO, the continuing long-term relevance of the institution is being questioned. The WTO does however remain an important institution in protecting the interests and rights of all countries, especially those which are poor.

3.6 Regional Frameworks: The AU & CARICOM

The African Union (AU) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) provide a mechanism for more focused region-to-region relations between Africa and the English speaking Caribbean. At the core of these regional efforts are activities which relate to the Diaspora. The importance of the Diaspora was heightened by changes to the AU's Constitutive Act designed to facilitate and encourage full participation of the African Diaspora in the continent's affairs, including key policy organs such as the AU's Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).⁴⁰

The first African Diaspora Forum was held in Washington DC in December 2002 during which regional chapters were established. The first of these, the Caribbean Chapter, was inaugurated in September 2004, with a mandate to facilitate cooperation with the AU under the latter's 'Bridge Atlantic Initiative' which was established partially to encourage cooperation on diasporic matters.⁴¹

An important milestone in forging closer relations between Africa and the Caribbean was the South African, African Union and Caribbean Diaspora Conference of March 16-17, 2005, which convened in Jamaica. The conference: Towards Unity and United Action by Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a Better World: The Case of South Africa, brought together participants across a wide spectrum, including those from political and diplomatic spheres, as well as representatives from civil society, youth groups and members of the Rastafari movement.⁴²

The conference marked South Africa's celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the end of apartheid and the efforts of the Caribbean Diaspora in that struggle. At the core of the multi-pronged objectives of the conference was the need to revitalize the "historical and cultural bonds between Africa and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean, to establish mechanisms for building stronger political and

39. The Doha Round was launched at the WTO's Fourth Ministerial Conference in Qatar, November 2001 with a key objective to secure improved trading possibilities for developing countries.

40. Indeed, twenty of the AU's one hundred and fifty General Assembly seats are allocated to the African Diaspora. <http://www.dirco.gov.za/diaspora/docs/latestlayoutofdiaspora2005.pdf>.

41. <http://www.dirco.gov.za/diaspora/docs/latestlayoutofdiaspora2005.pdf>.

42. Ibid

economic relations...[and] identify opportunities for future collaboration.”⁴³

The foundation for the conference had been set by an earlier visit to the Caribbean by President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, as part of his State visit to Jamaica and attendance at the CARICOM conference of Heads of Government in Montego Bay held over the period June 29-2 July 2003.⁴⁴ Addressing an event at UWI’s Mona (Jamaica) campus, President Mbeki spoke of an ‘African Renaissance’ to encompass “all Africans, both in Africa and the Africa Diaspora,”⁴⁵ using the opportunity to identify the problems facing Africans in the 21st century as those of: “poverty, under development and marginalization.”⁴⁶

Increased focus on the Diaspora took an important step forward with the hosting of the Global African Diaspora Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, on May 28, 2012 under the leadership of the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. In attendance were leaders from the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America and representatives of the African Diaspora.⁴⁷ The Summit’s Declaration recalled the various processes by which the AU had invited the African Diaspora to participate in the building of the African Union,⁴⁸ and chronicled AU decisions related to the Development of the Diaspora Initiative which was adopted by the AU’s Executive Council in Maputo, Mozambique, in July 2003.⁴⁹

The Declaration also included a program for action and collaboration on matters pertaining to the Diaspora and was followed by another conference in December 4-6, 2015, between the AU’s Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO), CARICOM and the Caribbean Pan-African Network (CSPAN), aimed at strengthening ties between the AU and the Caribbean on Diaspora matters.⁵⁰ On December 23, 2013, the UN launched the International Decade of People of African Descent (2015-2024).

In August 2018, CARICOM’s Secretary General and the AU’s Deputy Chair met on a multi-pronged agenda which included African-Caribbean solidarity around the current EU-ACP post Cotonou negotiations and formalization of an institutional relationship between the two in order to: “promote cooperation and strengthen the deep bond of friendship,” and to engage in joint action on issues of mutual interest on the global stage, climate change being one of them.⁵¹ While the AU communique mere months earlier, in March 2018, of its intention to undertake negotiations with the EU outside of the ACP framework would not have inspired confidence with respect of the solidarity between the two regions, perhaps an important objective of this meeting was to reassure the Caribbean of the importance of the relationship to Africa.

This meeting was followed on November 23, 2018 by another to discuss strategies to improve connectivity between the Caribbean and Africa. Convened in Guyana between CARICOM, the AU and the International Civil Aviation Organization, an important objective of the meeting was to “boost trade and tourism between the regions.”⁵² The meeting called for concrete measures aimed at

43. Ibid

44. <https://gleaner.newspaperarchive.com/kingston-gleaner/2003-06-30/page-2/>

45. Ibid

46. Ibid

47. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/appablog.wordpress.com/2012/05/28/declaration-of-the-global-african-diaspora-summit/amp/>

48. Article 3(q) of the AU’s Constitutive Act invites the African Diaspora to participate as an ‘important component in the building of the African Union. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/appablog.wordpress.com/2012/05/28/declaration-of-the-global-african-diaspora-summit/amp/>

49. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/appablog.wordpress.com/2012/05/28/declaration-of-the-global-african-diaspora-summit/amp/>
50. <https://au.int/fr/node/19489>.

51. <https://caricom.org/media-center/communications/press-releases/caricom-and-the-african-union-discuss-formalising-relationship>

52. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181123/caricom-welcomes-auc-initiatives-promote-connectivity-and-under-saatm>

implementation of the Declaration of the Global African Diaspora Summit (2012) and Article 7 of the AU's Development Agenda 2063, which speaks to the goal of a continent with "beneficial links with the Diaspora."⁵³ The meeting also discussed the possibility of negotiating an open skies agreement between the CARICOM states and Africa's regional communities noting the importance of boosting trade, investment and tourism between the two regions, and promoting joint cultural festivals.⁵⁴

3.7 Bilateral Relations

Relations between Africa and the Caribbean are also expressed through bilateral ties and diplomatic relations at the national level. The smaller Caribbean countries, namely those of the Eastern Caribbean, are challenged by the quantum of resources required to open and maintain overseas embassies. This reality has precluded their ability to operate individual embassies in Africa.⁵⁵ As Director General of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)⁵⁶ in 2005, the author proposed the opening of a joint Mission to service either the AU, or South Africa in a bid to augment and maintain political and economic ties with Africa. While the recommendation was not taken up at the time as a result of the resources required to do so, there is reason to believe that this will be up for consideration again.

Larger Caribbean countries, including Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica, operate embassies or high commissions in several African countries, notably South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya while others, such as Belize, Guyana and Suriname choose to operate consulates in some countries.

African countries also maintain embassies and high commissions in the Caribbean. Given the relatively small size of the latter, some countries maintain an embassy in one island from which to manage relations with the region. The Kingdom of Morocco, for example, opened an embassy in December 2014, in St Lucia, from which it covers the English-speaking islands of Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad & Tobago, St Vincent and the Grenadines.⁵⁷ Morocco had previously managed its relations with the Caribbean countries through its embassy in Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic.⁵⁸

Cuba hosts twenty-two African embassies, more so than any other Latin American or Caribbean country.⁵⁹ While African culture is deeply rooted in Cuba's history as in the rest of the Caribbean, Cuba's 1959 revolution was an inspiration to many of the youthful anti-colonial movements in Africa. More to the point however, is the fact that Cuba has long been an early proponent of South-South co-operation. The country contributed soldiers to the continent's wars of liberation, as well as technical and other resources in support of the social and economic development of several African countries. Cuba deployed thousands of doctors and nurses to West Africa more recently in the fight against Ebola and significant numbers of young Africans are also studying in Cuba on Cuban scholarships.

53. Ibid

54. Ibid

55. The OECS has set the precedent of pooling sovereignty in the operating of a joint embassy. Such a modality exists in the Eastern Caribbean States Embassy to the Kingdom of Belgium and the EU. In this modality, the author was the Ambassador representing four Caribbean Countries in Europe.

56. The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States is a regional integration grouping encompassing nine of the Caribbean smaller states in the Eastern Caribbean, six of whom are also members of CARICOM. In recent times, both the French Overseas Territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe have received associate membership status.

57. <https://www.embassypages.com/morocco>

58. <https://www.visahq.com/morocco/embassy/dominican-republic/>

59. <https://www.embassy-worldwide.com/country/cuba/>

The country has also provided much by way of resources in support of the social and economic development of its Caribbean neighbours. In many ways, within the Global South, despite its size and the constraints of the long-standing American economic embargo,⁶⁰ Cuba has emerged as a model for South-South cooperation and remains an important conduit for relations between Africa and the Caribbean.

Libya's President Colonel Gadhafi was also a vocal supporter of the Diaspora. In the early 2000's President Gadhafi provided the gift of financial resources to the OECS to provide support to the region's development. The funds were used to finance policy work leading to creation of the OECS's Economic Union in 2011.⁶¹ Proposals for the establishment of a Libyan funded Bank to support development were also under discussion at that time, but did not materialize.

On November 11 2016, South Africa sought to deepen its links with the Caribbean by suggesting collaboration with CARICOM on an agenda of mutual interests ⁶² including issues relating to correspondent banking, climate change, reparation, blacklisting of so called "uncooperative tax jurisdictions," the status of middle-income countries and their graduation from concessionary sources of financing, the agendas of the G20 and the select group of countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa known as the BRICS.⁶³

4. Have Relations Between Africa & the Caribbean Met Expectations?

Africa and the Caribbean cooperate in various multilateral frameworks and fora with others from the Global South on the basis of natural affinities and shared interests. They have also built a network of regional and bi-lateral frameworks to facilitate their engagement. In 2012 they adopted the Declaration of the Global African Diaspora Summit with its programs for joint action and engagement in a number of important areas.

Seven year later, implementation remains lacking. While mechanisms to engage the Diaspora have been developed, despite the reality of their existence in significant numbers in important centres of world power, insufficient attention has been devoted to transforming their numbers into a political force, and the full scope of the political and socio-economic dimensions of the African-Caribbean relationship has yet to be realized. The relationship which seemed particularly vibrant in the early days of the struggle against colonialism, apartheid and the fight for racial equality, today seems fragmented and ad hoc.

Perhaps there are a couple of explanations, one of which would suggest that the relationship, while important emotionally, is not viewed today as being politically and economically significant. There may be other contributing factors. As African and Caribbean societies have matured, so too have

60. The USA has maintained a trade embargo on Cuba since the 1960's.

61. The author's personal knowledge of events during tenure as Director General of the OECS. This information would also have been in the public domain at the time.

62. <https://caricom.org/media-center/communications/press-releases/caricom-south-africa-solidify-diplomatic-relations>

63. The grouping of the BRICS was established in 2009 with headquarters in China. The main objective is to collaborate on matters pertaining to the development of member countries. In the capacity of CARICOM Chair, the PM of Jamaica attended the 10th BRICS Summit in South Africa in July 25-28 2018. In this capacity, the PM had also attended the 13th summit of the G20 in Buenos Aires, Argentina on November 30 and December 1, 2018 <https://caricom.org/media-center/communications/press-releases/caricom-south-africa-solidify-diplomatic-relations>

priorities, and new alliances and have also emerged. International and regional power structures have changed and the world order is evolving. The bi-polar world of the Cold War has become one with a single superpower, the USA, whose star is waning, as another, China's, seems to be on the ascent.

Great Powers rivalries are also in the making, and power centres are shifting. These changes bring with them opportunities as well as challenges which ultimately must be prioritized and managed by all states, regardless of size, requiring the deployment of resources and attention on multiple fronts. At a global level, the African-Caribbean relationship may not seem to be one requiring the deployment of strategic resources.

In addition, multilateral frameworks bring challenges of their own. The wide range of interests within groups in areas relating to foreign policy, coalitions, economic structures, population size and levels of development pose significant impediments when seeking consensus and joint action.⁶⁴ These realities pose challenges for the relationship between the Caribbean and Africa, given the disparities which exist between the regions and their member states in several areas.

At the current time both African and Caribbean leaders engage separately in a number of regular summits with other countries and groups. These take place between the AU and the EU as well as with other countries. CARICOM, for example, meets in high level political summits with the EU, UK, Spain, Korea, Japan, and China, among others. However regular summits between Caribbean and African leaders are not the norm. Nonetheless, an agenda built around issues on which there is a convergence of interests, steered by Heads of Government meeting in regular summits to shape and direct a program of actions organized at the international as well as the regional level, bears consideration given the benefits which could accrue.⁶⁵ Such summits, focusing on development cooperation between the two regions, as well as collaboration to influence policy and debate on the global stage, provide the potential to unlocking benefits for both sides, while increasing the political capital and leverage of the two regions.

Beyond sending an important political signal with respect of the importance of the relationship, such structured meetings would provide a political forum for setting political and policy agendas for coordinated action across an array of multilateral frameworks, including the Bretons Woods Institutions, the United Nations, the WTO, the ACP, the BRICS, G20, G77+China, and others. Importantly, they would revitalize the relationship and provide an important framework for reporting on actions undertaken, and moving the joint agenda forward.

4.1 An Agenda for Joint Action: The International Stage

A joint African-Caribbean program to tackle issues on the global agenda should consider a range of coordinated initiatives and actions dealing with matters related to climate change, resilience, adaptation and natural disasters; the global financial system and issues pertaining to de-risking and compliance in tax jurisdictions; international trade, value chains and the role of trade as a tool of development; support for middle income countries in transition and OECD development co-operation

64. Deriving consensus is difficult. Even within the small regional grouping of CARICOM comprising states which are fairly homogenous, divisions exist with respect of an appropriate regional position on the situation of Venezuela, a regional neighbour. Divisions on this subject are even more pronounced in the thirty-five member Organisation of American States on the subject.

65. While the argument can be made that the AU-CARICOM modality provides the basis for such an institutional Framework, CARICOM does not represent the entire Caribbean, and systematic, regular political contact driven by Heads of Government, setting political and policy agendas does not take place.

policies beyond aid; health and non-communicable diseases (NCDs); slavery its aftermath, race relations, equity, and the issue of reparations;⁶⁶ Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), the eradication of poverty and financing for development; migration and human trafficking; security and the movement of arms and drugs; technology transfer, appropriate technology, & the development of technology hubs; support for micro, small and medium enterprises; development of cultural and creative industries; reducing the cost of repatriation of remittances from the Diaspora. These issues and more, all form the basis for an agenda ripe with multiple possibilities for joint action across a range of fora.

Joint efforts aimed at providing support to the Diaspora in the centres in which they live also merits discussion. The ability of the Diaspora to use their voice as political tools in the policy making processes in those parts of the world in which they are resident - has not been sufficiently considered. Much more emphasis has been placed by Caribbean political machineries in ensuring that the Diaspora return home to vote in national elections, than exploiting the utility of the Diaspora as a political force in the cities of Great Powers who engage in decision making at times unfavourable to African and Caribbean interests.⁶⁷ The immense influence of the Jewish lobby in American politics is an interesting lesson in this regard.

4.2 A Catalyst for South-South Cooperation

Opportunities for lucrative trade, investment, business and tourism links between Africa and the Caribbean exist, but have been stymied by a lack of connectivity between the two regions. Despite the relatively short distance between the closest points of Africa and South America, for example, a distance of 1600 miles (2575 km) across the southern Atlantic, (which is less than half the distance between London and New York,)⁶⁸ travel between the two normally involves long hauls from the south to the northern Atlantic with stops and transfers in the USA or Europe, followed by onward travel either across the northern Atlantic, or across the continent of Europe southwards, to various destinations in Africa.

This pattern of air transportation is a legacy of the colonial history of these regions during which the colonies produced goods for use in the 'mother country' importing from the latter most of what they needed in return. In recent times however, air links across the southern Atlantic serviced by both Latin American and African airlines, connect both sides of the southern Atlantic with flights operating from South Africa to Brazil.⁶⁹ No direct links exist as yet from Africa to the Caribbean. While non-direct flights exist from Barbados to Brazil, for example, interlining operations will be required to facilitate development of the new Brazil-Africa air bridge as a viable alternative to northern routes providing opportunities for African, Caribbean and Latin American businesses to take root and flourish.

Direct Africa-Caribbean routes involving multiple-destinations in the Caribbean given the latter's smaller markets, would however reduce transit time considerably. Tourism, cultural exchanges, creative industries and business ventures could make African-Caribbean air links viable, while

66. CARICOM established a Reparations Commission in July 2013.

67. The recent unfortunate events surrounding the deportation of hundreds of persons from the UK back to the Caribbean who were part of the so called 'Windrush' generation landed in the UK since 1948 represents some of the more egregious situations facing the Diaspora. In this case Caribbean Leaders rose to the challenge of engaging with the UK government on the issue, however this was after the fact.

68. <http://www.oafrica.com/broadband/brazil-and-africa/>

69. https://www.latam.com/en_uk/press-room/releases/latam-airlines-launches-service-to-south-africa--becoming-the-on/.

adding an exciting new dimension to the relationship between the two regions.⁷⁰ The removal of visa requirements for tourism purposes and exploration of short stay business visits should also be on the table for discussion.

The establishment of a centre for the Diaspora should be another area of cooperation. Such a centre could be affiliated with a network of Universities in both regions and provide a platform to coordinate, undertake and share research and other experiences related to the Diaspora, promote cultural and educational exchanges and inform policies and strategies for adoption by Diaspora units at the regional and national levels in both regions. The objectives of such an effort would be to ensure greater integration of the diasporic communities in the development of both the Caribbean and Africa through the sharing of skills and experiences and the transfer of knowledge and technology. The centre could also play a valuable role in developing specific strategies aimed at assisting the Diaspora to use the weight of their voices politically in influencing and shaping policies favourable to African and Caribbean interests in the main centres of global power in which they live.

South-South cooperation between the two regions can also be advanced through the establishment of centres for joint research at regional universities. Such a model was recently inaugurated by the March 2017 signing of a memorandum of understanding between UWI and South Africa's University of Johannesburg to establish an Institute for Global African Affairs. The latter was officially launched on November 5th at the University of Johannesburg followed by a similar event on November 26th, 2018, at UWI's Cave Hill Campus in Barbados.⁷¹

A framework for sharing lessons of experience and technology transfer also has a role to play in cooperation between the two regions. The Caribbean has much to learn from Africa's use of technology to advance micro payment schemes and support activities in the health sector as well as in the development of technology hubs. Likewise, the Caribbean is well advanced in its creation of a single market and economy and in the deployment of a regional negotiating mechanism to negotiate trade deals. Though different in scale, much of that scholarship would be helpful in supporting Africa's own ambitions in creating the African Free Trade Area (AFTA).

Last but not least, both regions support and develop world class athletes and could combine resources in the development of world class sports academies in football, cricket, track and field among others.

5. The Future Relationship

The future of Caribbean-African relations is one ripe with potential and promise, but it requires the investments of time, attention and political will to transform the relationship into one fit for purpose and suitable for these modern times. In every multilateral grouping within which African and Caribbean states participate, their sheer numbers (seventy-one) renders them an important bloc and influential coalition partner.⁷² This reality could be leveraged by Africa and the Caribbean in engaging, on multiple fronts, in shaping and influencing the theatres within which their interests are being debated, aided by a more politicized Diaspora.

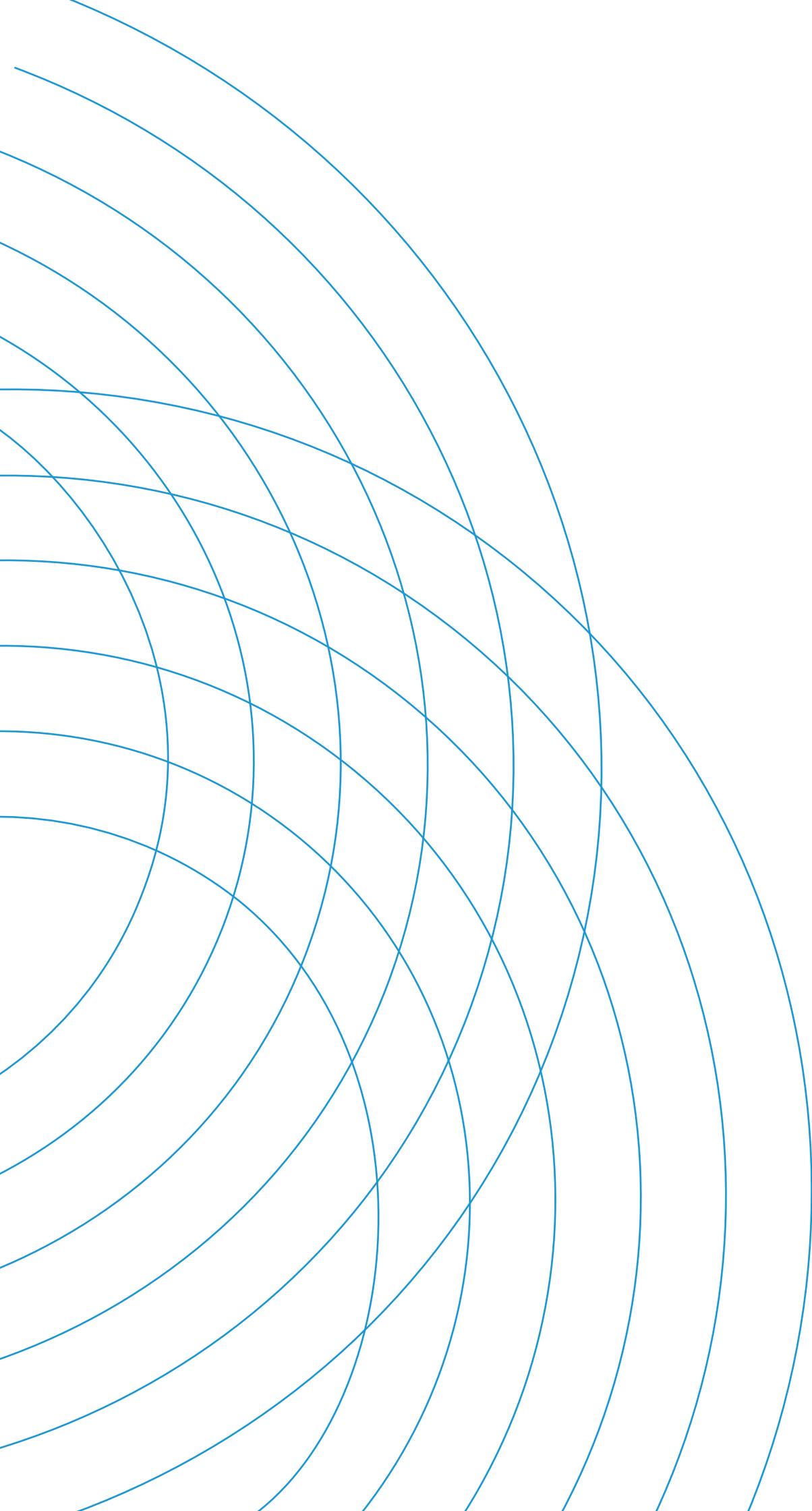
70. Direct flights also operate from Angola to Cuba.

71. The flagship program will be that of a Master's Degree in Global African Studies with a focus on the role of Africa and Africans internationally, with Africans defined as those of both the continent and the Diaspora with a particular emphasis on the Diaspora of the Caribbean. <https://sta.uwi.edu/news/releases/release.asp?id=21864>

72. There are fifty-four countries in Africa and a total of seventeen in the wider Caribbean.

They also have the possibility to significantly increase the scope for development cooperation between them and enhancing prospects for the social and economic development of both regions, by making better use of existing resources and fora within which to do so, while elaborating new political structures within which to engage. The current relationship, characterised by encounters and actions which are fragmented rather than being part of a wider approach to systemic relationship building, makes for a relationship which is neither solid nor reliable.

Africa and the Caribbean united in common purpose have the potential to carve for their progeny the future to which they aspire. While many of the issues on the early Pan-African radar have today been laid to rest, the agenda, far from being static, continues to evolve as new and pressing concerns emerge. The relationship can only survive if both regions are willing to make the political and other investments required. Africa, the Caribbean and the Diaspora will benefit from any such pooling of sovereignty, resolve and purpose. The spirit of the Pan African Movement and the strength of the past relationship would suggest it. The future demands it.







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