



**MESSAGE FROM THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
TO THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) ON THE OCCASION OF THE
FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY**

The Caribbean Community conveys warm and fraternal wishes to the African Union (AU). It is with great pleasure that the kind invitation to our Secretary-General to be a specially invited guest to the Fifth Ordinary Session of Assembly of the African Union and to address the Opening Session was received. We were honored by this gesture and deeply regret that the coincidence of dates with our Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government - the supreme organ of the Caribbean Community - has prevented his attendance.

The launch of the African Union in Durban in 2002 was an historic event for the Continent of Africa. In the three short years since this event, the African Union has made its presence felt in the International Community. CARICOM congratulates the African Union on its achievements. Our Community follows with great interest the creative efforts of the AU in the development of new institutional arrangements to achieve the objective of accelerating integration in the continent to enable Africa to play its rightful place in the International Community. We are heartened by the decision of the African Union to include its Diaspora as the Sixth Region and to involve the representatives of the Caribbean Diaspora in deliberations in the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the civil society advisory group.

The bonds between the African Continent and the Caribbean are strong. A large proportion of our population can trace their ancestral roots to Africa. For many years we have worked closely with AU Member States in many fora, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group, the Commonwealth and the

United Nations. The Caribbean supported the efforts of the people of Southern Africa to eradicate the scourge of apartheid. Many of our professionals have given their services to the African Continent. The advent of the African Union has strengthened these ties and has created the opportunity for future cooperation between Africa and the Caribbean at all levels.

If both our Regions have chosen the sometimes complex route of integration to fulfill our aspirations of socio-economic prosperity, it is because of our mutual belief that our greatest strength and consequence potential to tackle the future development needs of our respective Regions lies in unity and solidarity.

We welcomed the visit to our Community of the President of South Africa in July 2003 during our 30th anniversary celebrations, particularly in light of the fact that it was during his tenure as the First President of the African Union. His visit highlighted the spirit of cooperation between the Caribbean and opened the doors for greater collaboration and solidarity between Africa and the Caribbean. The presence of Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados - the Lead Head of Government with responsibility for the the Community's flagship, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) - at the Second Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique was a demonstration of our commitment to work with the African Union to address our common problems and to strengthen our alliance in the face of global challenges. The meeting between CARICOM Heads of Government and some AU Member States at the time of the Commonwealth Heads in Abuja and the signing of a memorandum of understanding for future cooperation by our Foreign Ministers are other demonstrations of our commitment to the process of deeper collaboration.

At the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government on 3-5 July 2005, Heads of Government will receive a report of the outcome of the conference which was co-sponsored by the Government of Jamaica and South Africa on 16th-18th March 2005 under the theme, "Towards

Unity and United Action by Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a better world". This conference which was attended by all CARICOM Member States with representatives from both the public sector and civil society, recommended the further development of a concrete mechanism for the institutionalization of the relationships between the AU and CARICOM, identified specific areas for collaboration and the building of linkages between countries in Africa and the Caribbean, called for collaboration among civil society and agreed that CARICOM and the AU would explore ways to harness international diplomacy to promote our mutual objectives in the UN and the WTO. The endorsement of these recommendations by the CARICOM Heads of Government will allow for the mainstreaming of these initiatives in the work programme of the Community. The CARICOM Secretariat looks forward to working with the AU Secretariat to further these initiatives following the meetings of our respective Heads of Government.

Today, a significant number of the world's poorest people live in the countries that are Member States of the AU, yet this continent is the source of some of the world's richest resources. The adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the AU, is a reflection of your determination to harness your own resources to extricate yourselves from poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization. The Caribbean Community would like to offer its support in these efforts. We have observed with interest the steps which have been taken to implement this strategic framework for Africa's development. We share your view that good governance is a basic requirement for peace and security and in this context we welcome your design and implementation of the Peer Review Mechanism. This is a scheme worthy of emulation in our own Region.

We also welcome the recent G8 Africa Action Plan which promises debt relief, increased aid flows, a commitment to improve global market access for African exports and an agreement to provide medical assistance to the continent. We

note however, that even as these measures are discussed there are developments in the marketing of commodities, such as sugar and cotton, which negatively impact the future of many countries in both of our Regions. We share your concerns about the slow progress of the implementation of the Doha Development Work programme in the WTO. We encourage our trade negotiators to continue their collaboration so as to ensure that the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference yields positive results for both our Regions.

One of the common items on our respective Heads of Governments agendas is the preparations for the 60th Session of the UN General Assembly where the subject of the reform of the United Nations will be a major focus as well as High Level Plenary on the Millennium Declaration, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. CARICOM notes with interest the Ezulwini Consensus which sets out the AU position on United Nations reform. CARICOM Heads of Government will determine our Community's position at their current session bearing in mind that the decisions taken on UN reform will have long-lasting consequences for the functioning of the organisation, as well as for the development, security, and human rights issues that fall within its purview. The High Level Plenary on the MDGs will be a unique opportunity to refocus the global attention on matters of development and to seek to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the management of global economic affairs.

The Caribbean Community stands ready to strengthen its partnership with the African Union and takes this opportunity to wish you a fruitful and successful Fifth Assembly.

Castries, Saint Lucia
1 July 2005