

**26TH ANNUAL CARIBBEAN MULTI-NATIONAL
BUSINESS CONFERENCE (CMBC) 26-2021**

NOVEMBER 12 – 13, 2021

A VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

**Most Hon. P. J. Patterson,
Former Prime Minister of Jamaica,
Statesman-in-Residence UWI**

.....

P R E S E N T A T I O N
26th CMBC Conference
November 12 – 13, 2021

SALUTATIONS

APPRECIATION

Pleasure and privilege to be participant.

Virtual – thanks to modern technology.

Miss personal gathering and social interchange.

Hope COVID Pandemic will permit us to traditional mode next year.

I have been invited to make the Opening Presentation as we discuss the topic – **GLOBAL ECONOMIC INEQUITIES.**

There is no need for me to do so by referring to the volume of studies which have been done, some from time immemorial, or drown you in a pond of statistical analyses that exist in order to establish the inequities which have prevailed throughout the ages between what some have had the effrontery to distinguish as the Developed World and what the Christian hymn refers to as “the heathen lands afar where thick darkness broodeth yet”.

Whatever one’s theory of creation may be, the world never came into being with an inequitable divide – one part rich and the other part poor. It is the iniquities of man whether from the times of the Persian Empire, the Roman

Empire or the British and French Empires, which have determined until today to make it so,

Imperialism and Slavery, those two companions of evil, have left their indelible mark – essentially dividing the world between rich and poor by a gulf which is getting wider and wider daily.

Regrettably, the precious but limited time of this conference does not allow us to indulge in a history seminar – well needed though that may be. I have chosen instead to focus on the three Pandemics which confront mankind in the world of today – COVID-19, Climate Change and Racism.

We are suffering from COVID apartheid. The vaccine level in high income countries is close to 70%, while sub-Saharan Africa falls below 5%. Even despite the more recent efforts of the European Union, Canada, the USA, and UK, we still fall short of 1.6 billion additional doses to build global herd immunity. There can be no excuse for hoarding excessive supplies and then giving them away shortly before the expiry dates, so that they have eventually to be dumped.

International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and IMF should provide additional financing quickly to build adequate capacity for quick and widespread vaccination programmes.

Where poverty exists, the human vulnerability will increase, and the forecasts indicate that the world will lose US\$5.3 trillion if vaccination programmes are non-existent or ineffective in low-income countries.

The IMF predicts that

“Low percentages of vaccines in LDCs will make the whole world more vulnerable to repeated waves of COVID-19.

It will also prolong the period before they can benefit from rising commodity prices – and lead to a widening income disparity with Developed Countries.”

CLIMATE CHANGE

As we speak, the future of our world hangs on what is decided in Glasgow. For us in the Caribbean, any increase of rising temperature beyond 1.6 degrees Celsius makes us the bacon that goes with the egg.

It cannot be said too often – Words, however eloquent and repetitive, simply will not move the needle.

RACISM

There are those of our ancestry, who have done well – excelled professionally and even enjoyed prosperity – but for far too many people of African descent, throughout The Americas, the intractable racism pandemic manifests itself in abject poverty, absolute despair, hunger, the lack of water , poor education , squatting, inadequate public health access, higher infant mortality rates.

In operation is a criminal justice system characterised by racial profiling, police violence against coloured citizens and excessive incarceration of our young men.

To be frank and blunt the cancer of racism has never been more hydra-headed and dangerous than it appears today. We are reminded that slavery in the United States of America is still protected by The 13th Amendment to your Constitution, which forbids slavery and involuntary servitude, “Except as a punishment whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.”

Last year I spoke at this conference about the historic significance of the assassination of George Floyd.

It may have marked a decisive turning point indeed. It has made the Racists bolder and more defiant. How else can we explain the obnoxious legislation which is being rushed through several Southern States that would in fact deprive democracy of its most fundamental tenet – so aptly described by Abraham Lincoln as “Government of the people, for the people, by the people”? Are persons of colour no longer people? Is this Confederacy all over again in the 21st Century?

Is this why, migrants from the land of Haiti, whose martyrs Toussaint Louverture, Dessalines, Henri Christophe lit the flame for freedom from slavery and imperial domination, are treated worse than animals on the borders as they seek to escape the poverty and exploitation by French and American perversion over the years?

CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD

A central theme of our deliberations at this Conference goes beyond what has been and now prevails but what we can achieve by our collective effort in Charting The Way Forward. What man has done to wreck Mother Earth, it must now seek to undo by a mission of rescue, restoration, and regeneration.

There is one good omen this week. In Glasgow earlier this week, the two largest polluters China and the United States have announced their intentions; notwithstanding their ideological hostilities and rivalry in the competition for global supremacy to work together in the abolition of coal as a source of contaminated energy. Let's hope it will be a permanent star in the environmental firmament and not just an illusionary meteor.

Led by the prophet Marcus Mosiah Garvey and his disciple Kwame Nkrumah who severed the colonial link by the emergence of an Independent Ghana leading the way, there now exists 54 Nation States in Africa and 14 Sovereign States in the CARICOM family. At long last and for the very first time on September 7th, this year we witnessed the Virtual Africa-CARICOM Summit – its aim – “to promote ties and engagements between peoples of African descent in Africa and the Caribbean”.

On its agenda was how we foster integration across the ocean by overcoming colonial legacies of separation of our economies and peoples.

Let's face it – we have to remove the elephant from the room.

The time has come for the Leaders of Africa and the Caribbean with the full participation of our scholars and civil society, to bury the fable which the Europeans have spun, that Africa is equally to blame for the pernicious slave trade. The European beneficiaries have concealed their part in capturing by force, stealth, and the overthrow of tribal leaders who resisted.

Africa itself suffered tremendous losses also – entire generations of men and women who were vital for a variety of roles in the development of vast areas on the continent were stolen from Africa.

A vital next step from the AU-CARICOM Summit must be the consultations for an agreement between us to join as one in the fight for reparative justice. This is an essential prelude for a Reparation Summit between the Leaders from the enslaved Nations and all the governments of Europe which have been the beneficiaries of prosperity derived from slavery.

None of us can predict when COVID-19 will be brought under control universally, nor do we know with any degree of certainty when the destruction of our fragile environment will end.

What we do know is the world will never be the same again in the fields of governance, trade, health, education, or patterns of social behaviour. As we set out to create that New World Order, which is inevitable, what we the people of Africa and the Caribbean do know is that to shape our own destiny, we must

be present at the negotiating table and prepared to protect and promote our own interest.

It is to contribute to that imperative the P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy is devoted to make its contribution through scholarship, research, and advocacy.

We have made sure to engage scholars in the Diaspora to help with their counterparts in Africa and the Caribbean to ensure that the policy options we prepare enable our Heads of State and Government to be equipped with the best intellectual weapons they need.

It is to explore the opportunities for trade, investment, cultural exchanges, Carib News Community Foundation has dedicated its work and sought to advance the dialogue.

I wish you success and memorable achievements in this your 26th conference and look forward to meeting with all of you at that place which will be selected for us to gather in person once again next year.