

## **JAMAICA STATEMENT**

**DELIVERED BY MS. JOANNE ARCHIBALD, PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR,  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORTS**

**4<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN  
DESCENT**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS**

**CLOSING EVENT "HAITI'S INDEPENDENCE DEBT: 200 YEARS  
LATER"**

**April 17, 2025**

Two hundred and twenty-one years ago, Commander Jean-Jacques Dessalines, successor to General Toussaint L'Overture, declared Haiti a free and independent country, after a 12-year war which established the first Black Republic in the Western Hemisphere. The Declaration of Independence challenged several racist-inspired beliefs held about Black people, among which was that as a race, Black people were incapable of organisation, political thought, enlightenment and the capacity to chart our own future. History has shown that this fabricated 'philosophy' was only one of convenience to excuse the horrible regime of chattel slavery.

The drums beat loudly for justice and we join with the reparatory justice pathway of the position paper of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent; the

rallying cry of our Professor Shepherd and all those who demand today - *'from Duty to Duty'* - from " *promise to payment'* – from *'Paris to Port Au Prince'*. (*This is our Redemption Song*). It is without debate that the ransom, yes, racist pact, the so called 'Independence debt' has led to the socio-economic and political crisis that currently faces our CARICOM partner, and neighbour.

Today, the Government and people of Jamaica re-affirm our solidarity while paying homage to Haiti's sacrifice and example. We call for *reparations now*, in terms expressed by the people of Haiti who must be the chief architects, to claim their destiny of prosperity, equality, development, dignity and identity. Our solidarity and kinship was birthed and etched in our legacy, from the time Jamaican Maroon, Dutty Boukman, travelled to give strength to the cause – in an insurrection which culminated in a successful war. Jamaica is unrelenting in its resolve to work with Haiti until the just debt is paid. French President Emmanuel Macron has now echoed the truth that that the colossal indemnity they have paid in exchange for independence 'placed a price on the freedom of a young nation, which was .. confronted with the unjust force of history from its very inception' - on this the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Let this be the beginning of the final steps to reparations:- recognition, justice, and development in keeping with CARICOM's Ten Point Plan and moreover, the demands of the people of Haiti.

Our campaign for reparations is one that we undertake together, to correct the historical imbalances, contrived negative connotations, and injustices of the past, which continue in our present reality. Consonant with the theme of the International Decade of People of African Descent (IDPAD) – the 2<sup>nd</sup> decade, we call for Reparations ***“Recognition, Justice, and Development”*** for Haiti and for our people everywhere - ‘injustice anywhere - is - injustice everywhere’.

The Struggle Continues - Victory is Assured!

***Aluta Continua!***