

**MESSAGE BY THE HONOURABLE GASTON BROWNE
PRIME MINISTER OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
ON THE OCCASION OF AFRICA-CARICOM DAY 2026
SEPTEMBER 7, 2026**

Fellow citizens of Antigua and Barbuda,
Citizens of the Caribbean Community,
Brothers and sisters of Africa,

Today, September 7, we celebrate Africa-CARICOM Day—a day born out of a historic commitment to strengthen the bonds between two regions separated by geography, but united by history, ancestry, culture, resilience and a shared determination to shape a more just and prosperous future.

This day carries particular significance for Antigua and Barbuda.

On September 7, 2021, Caribbean and African leaders gathered for the historic inaugural CARICOM-Africa Summit, marking a new chapter in relations between our two regions. I was proud to advocate for the recognition of September 7 as **Africa-CARICOM Day**, because I believe that the relationship between Africa and the Caribbean must be more than a historical connection. It must become a **strategic partnership for the future**.

The recognition of this day is therefore not merely ceremonial. It is a declaration of our shared identity, our shared interests and our shared responsibility to future generations.

For centuries, our peoples have endured the consequences of slavery, colonialism, exploitation and exclusion from the structures that shaped the global economic and political order. Yet from that painful history emerged people of extraordinary resilience, creativity and determination.

Today, we have an opportunity—and indeed an obligation—to transform that shared history into **shared prosperity**.

As Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, I reaffirm my country's unwavering commitment to deepening the relationship between Africa and the Caribbean Community.

We must move beyond declarations and translate our solidarity into **trade, investment, technology, education, tourism, transportation, culture and people-to-people partnerships.**

The strengthening of air connectivity between Africa and the Caribbean represents an important step in this direction.

The partnership involving Air Peace and LIAT Air demonstrates what is possible when we replace distance with connectivity and intention with action.

Our people must be able to travel, conduct business, exchange ideas, invest and build relationships with greater ease.

Antigua and Barbuda has also demonstrated its commitment through our engagement with the **African Export-Import Bank—Afreximbank**. We see this relationship as an important platform for expanding access to capital, increasing trade and investment, supporting entrepreneurship and creating new opportunities for our people.

But our relationship with Africa cannot be measured only in dollars and cents.

Africa is not simply a market for the Caribbean, and the Caribbean is not simply a market for Africa. We are family.

Strengthening Africa-CARICOM relations is also about reconnecting a people separated by the forces of history.

It is about our children understanding where they came from. It is about celebrating African and Caribbean culture, music, food, language, spirituality, art and traditions. It is about restoring pride in an African-Caribbean identity that has survived centuries of attempts to diminish it.

This is why Antigua and Barbuda has consistently sought to strengthen its diplomatic engagement with Africa. Since 2014, we have taken important steps to deepen our diplomatic relations with the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the African Union. These initiatives reflected our conviction that the Caribbean must have a stronger voice and presence on the African continent.

We must now build upon that foundation.

I reiterate Antigua and Barbuda's call for the establishment of a **CARICOM-Africa Joint Commission** to provide a sustained institutional mechanism for advancing our common agenda.

We must also strengthen cooperation in mass media, information sharing, education and public diplomacy. Our people cannot build a strong partnership if they remain unfamiliar with one another.

We must tell our own story, share our own narratives and create greater spaces for Africans and Caribbean people to see, understand and appreciate each other.

As we look ahead, I believe that **2026 must be a year of renewed action.**

First, we must intensify our collaboration in the global movement for **Reparatory Justice.**

The struggle for reparatory justice is not about seeking to reverse history. It is about confronting the consequences of history and addressing the enduring inequalities created by slavery and colonialism.

CARICOM has demonstrated remarkable leadership in this global movement, and Antigua and Barbuda remains firmly committed to that cause.

The Third CARICOM Regional Conference on Reparations, to be held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from September 17 to 19, provides an important opportunity to advance this work and to build upon the commitments made at the first and second CARICOM Reparations Conferences, held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2013 and Antigua and Barbuda in 2014.

We must continue to advance the CARICOM Reparations Commission's work and the principles articulated in our revised **Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice**, now presented as **“A Manifesto for the Coming of Enlightenment.”**

Reparatory justice must remain firmly connected to development, economic empowerment, education, technology, health, cultural restoration and the right of our people to determine their own future.

Second, we must expand **Africa-CARICOM trade and investment.**

The time has come to significantly increase the volume of goods, services, capital, knowledge and expertise moving between our regions. We must encourage our private sectors to engage each other, our financial institutions to create new opportunities, and our governments to remove unnecessary barriers to commerce.

Third, we must make **connectivity** a central pillar of our partnership.

Geographical distance must no longer be allowed to define the strength of our relationship. Better air and maritime links, digital connectivity and greater mobility between Africa and the Caribbean are essential to building a modern partnership.

Fourth, we must place **culture and education** at the centre of our relationship.

Our schools, universities, cultural institutions, media organisations and community organisations should become active bridges between Africa and the Caribbean.

Africa-CARICOM Day should therefore not be confined to one day of speeches and ceremonies.

It should inspire exhibitions, lectures, cultural performances, educational programmes, documentaries, exchanges and opportunities for our young people to discover and celebrate our shared heritage.

Our young people must inherit not only the memory of our past, but the **confidence to shape our common future**.

Fellow citizens,

The world is changing rapidly. New centers of economic power are emerging. Global alliances are being reshaped. The developing world is demanding a greater voice in international decision-making.

Africa and the Caribbean cannot afford to remain on the margins of these transformations.

Together, we represent peoples with enormous human potential, abundant natural resources, creative industries, cultural influence and strategic importance.

Our challenge is not whether Africa and CARICOM have the capacity to become stronger partners. Our challenge is whether we have the political will to act together.

I believe we do.

And Antigua and Barbuda will continue to provide leadership in transforming that belief into action.

Let us therefore use Africa-CARICOM Day 2026 to renew our commitment to **unity over division, partnership over isolation, development over dependency, and justice over historical injustice.**

Let us build bridges across the Atlantic.

Let us strengthen the bonds between our peoples.

Let us turn our shared history into shared opportunity.

And let us ensure that the next generation inherits an Africa and Caribbean partnership that is stronger, more prosperous, more connected and more influential in the global community.

The recognition of September 7 as Africa-CARICOM Day was a powerful statement of where we have come from.

What we do with this day—and with this relationship—will determine where we go next.

May Africa and the Caribbean continue to rise together.

May our partnership grow stronger.

And may the bonds between our peoples endure for generations to come.

Happy Africa-CARICOM Day 2026!

Long live Africa-CARICOM solidarity.
Long live the enduring bonds between our peoples.