

St Kitts PM sees hope in Africa-Caribbean trade

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THE fourth edition of the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF2025) opened here yesterday with St Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Dr Terrance Drew saying the low level of trade between Africa and the Caribbean is a point of optimism.

"...the trade between the Caribbean and Africa is roughly 1% or less. That is a very, very small percentage," Drew told a panel of African leaders after the opening ceremony, which was attended by over 3,000 delegates.

"You might look at that and say, 'Why is it important?'"

"When I look at a small number like that, I see hope. It is a silver lining. There's only one place that trade can go. It cannot go down anymore. It is an opportunity to go up. Hence, we should establish this deeper relationship."

Drew identified areas where he saw opportunities for African investment in the Caribbean, including emerging technology, agricultural products, and renewable energy.

"The Caribbean has geothermal energy. Kenya is very good at geothermal energy. We have sun, we have wind. Our potential is vast when it comes to the energy space," Drew said, noting the critical role of tourism to Caribbean economies while also highlighting the absence of a Caribbean-Africa air bridge.

"To go from the Caribbean to Africa, you have to go north to come back south, and it takes sometimes two to three days. However, in the Caribbean, we have direct flights from Europe and various cities within North America."

He said it is shorter to fly directly from St Kitts and Nevis to Algeria than to travel via London, in the United Kingdom.

"Yet, I have direct flights from my country to London, and no direct flights from my country to the African continent."

Therefore, there's great opportunity for growth in the tourism sector, with Africa having over one billion people and the Caribbean being a

premier area for tourism."

Drew also spoke of the creative industry, saying the Caribbean region, despite its small size, has "certainly punched above our weight in the creative space", pointing to the Caribbean as the birthplace of reggae and pan, the only musical instrument invented in the 20th century.

"So it means, therefore, there is so much room for growth, even when it comes to the creatives," Drew said, noting also the potential in healthcare and sports.

"What I'm basically saying is that there are opportunities in every sphere of our development, because our trade today only represents 1% with Africa and with global Africa, that will only go up."

Creating opportunities

Drew is preparing to take over the revolving six-month chairmanship of the Caribbean regional integration movement, Caricom, which groups 15 countries.

"I want to bring a message from the Caribbean that we are much integrated, and we are much interested in bringing a greater relationship with Africa as the continent and its sixth region."

"This will help us to create opportunities for our people and to write a history - but a history not written by them, but a history written by us, for us, by us, for our own interest," Drew said.

Drew noted the historical links between Africa, slavery and the Caribbean -

an, and the contribution of the Caribbean - an leaders, such as Marcus Garvey, to some countries on the continent during the post-colonial period.

"The Caribbean has always been a fundamental part of Pan Africanism," he said, mentioning the impact of Bob Marley in reggae and George Padmore, a Caribbean intellectual who was tasked with helping to set up the Pan African movement within the government of Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister of independent Ghana.