

'We must stand apart no longer'

Antigua PM Browne urges Africa-Caricom coalition to connect



Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, front row second and third right, pose for a photo with African and Caricom leaders at the Second Africa-Caricom Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, yesterday.

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The regions of Africa and the Caribbean must no longer stand apart but unite against the legacy of inequities and further design institutions that foster integration, resilience, and prosperity, says Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

Browne is also recommending an Africa-Caricom coalition for air connectivity investment. He made the call yesterday at the Second Africa-Caricom summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Browne, who was the chairman of the first Africa-Caricom Summit in 2021, told attendees that leaders had agreed in 2021, "...that our regions must no longer stand apart but unite against the legacy of inequities and further design institutions that foster integration, resilience, and prosperity."

Among commitments was the recognition of September 7th as Africa-Caribbean Day and charting a course towards air service agreements, investment protection, double taxation treaties, and visa waivers to expand trade and people-to-people ties.

Browne said, “Today, this second summit gives us the opportunity to turn these commitments into action.”

On the summit’s theme issue of reparations, Browne said, “This is not about race, creed, or division it is about justice. The wealth of the Global North was built on the backs of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Reparations must, therefore, be rooted in acknowledgment and apology, but extend beyond words to include investments in education, health, technology, climate resilience, and cultural renewal.”

He added, “Reparations aren’t a plea for pity. They are a demand for fairness, for correcting historic imbalances in finance, trade, and governance...

“Yet even as we recognise these truths, we face a challenge greater than resources or skills; it is the challenge of political will. Too often, we have allowed hesitation to paralyse action. Too often, eloquence in speeches has not been matched by courage in deeds. Let this summit be remembered as the moment we turned the tide when Africa and the Caribbean chose unity over fragmentation, action over inertia, and courage over complacency.”

Browne also recommended action in three areas. On connectivity, he suggested use of the Air Peace, Ghana Air and Ethiopian Airlines, with even one weekly flight.

“If this requires subsidies from a coalition of Caricom states, investment should be done. The cost of inaction is far higher than the price of a subsidised route. That single flight will carry not only passengers but the promise of expanded trade, cultural exchange, tourism, and investment. It will link families divided by history and reconnect communities across the Atlantic ...” Browne added.

“If a coalition of states must subsidise it, let us do so. The symbolic and strategic value of that single flight will outweigh its costs. It will carry not just passengers, but possibilities for our collective advancement.”

Browne urged a trade and investment preferential agreement for the combined markets representing 1.5 billion people. He recommended Africa’s grains, textiles, fruits, and energy flow into the Caribbean and regional rum, sugar, spices, tourism, and creative products find markets in Africa. He also suggested an Africa–Caribbean Academic Network for youths.