

RC AI's Remarks - Inaugural Lecture and Panel Discussion to Commemorate the UN Day for the Abolition of the Slave Trade – August 23rd, 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- Senator Dr. the Hon. Shantal Munro-Knight, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office with Responsibility for Culture
- Dr. The Hon Epsy Campbell Barr, Chair of the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent, Former Vice President of Costa Rica
- Dr The Most Hon Anthony Carter
- Senior UN Officials and Staff
- Government ministers,
- Members of parliament and senior government officials
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Distinguished Panellists
- Members of the Academic Community
- Other specially invited guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening, everyone.

On behalf of the UN system here in Barbados, I am honoured to be here today to commemorate the UN International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition. This is a day to remember the millions of people who were enslaved and trafficked across the Atlantic Ocean, and to reflect on the legacy of slavery that continues to impact our world today.

I am particularly pleased to welcome Dr. Epsy Campbell Barr, the President of the UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent, and former Vice President of Costa Rica. Dr. Campbell Barr is a tireless advocate for women's rights and social justice, and I am grateful for her presence here today for this inaugural lecture.

The transatlantic slave trade was a horrific chapter in human history and one of the worst violations of human rights ever recorded.

The legacy of slavery continues to impact our world today. Women of colour are more likely to live in poverty, to be unemployed, and to experience violence. They are also less likely to have access to education and healthcare.

In the Caribbean, women of colour face several specific challenges, including:

- A high rate of abused women not seeking help. According to a study by CARICOM, only 1 in 10 abused women in the Caribbean seeks help from a formal source. This is due to several factors, including the stigma associated with domestic violence, the lack of access to services, and the fear of retaliation from their abuser.
- A high adolescent birth rate. The adolescent birth rate in the Caribbean is 50% higher than the global average. This is due to several factors, including early sexual initiation, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, and the high rate of violence against girls.

The UN is committed to working for the empowerment of women including women of colour in the Caribbean. We continue to partner with all stakeholders - including women's organisations - to address the specific challenges facing these women, such as:

- The Regional Spotlight Initiative, which is a partnership between UN Women and the European Union to address all forms of violence against women and girls in the Caribbean. The initiative is working to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women, to provide support to survivors, build capacity of regional organisations to cultural change and to advocate for policy reforms.
- The 'Build Back Equal' partnership, which is a global initiative to ensure that women and girls are included in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership is working to provide economic opportunities for women, to improve access to healthcare and education, and to protect women from violence.
- A project funded through the UN HSTF aimed at working towards gender equity in resilient agricultural value chains. In commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the centuries of monoculture that it drove, it is fitting to celebrate the growth of inclusive, diversified and resilient agriculture systems.

We are also working to raise awareness of the issue of family violence and to challenge the stereotypes and stigma that surround it. We believe that by working together, we can create a more just and equitable world for women, girls and families in the Caribbean.

I am confident that through meaningful partnerships, we can reclaim our Atlantic destiny and empower women of colour in the Caribbean. Together, we can build a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you.