

# CENTRE for AFRICA-CARIBBEAN POLICY ADVOCACY

OFFICE OF THE STATESMAN IN RESIDENCE ■ The Most Honourable P.J. Patterson, ON, OGC, PC, QC

30 West Road • The University of the West Indies • Mona Campus • Kingston 7 • Tel: (876)929-5701-2 • Fax: (876)929-5705

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FOR: 'THE PJ PATTERSON CENTRE'

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*'P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Policy Advocacy'* calls for an  
**"INTERNATIONAL SOLUTION, TO THE COVID PANDEMIC".**

**Kingston:** Most Hon P.J. Patterson, Statesman in Residence at the P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Policy Advocacy, located at The University of the West Indies, (UWI) has stated that given the level of global connectivity and interdependence, the fight against COVID-19 **demands a multilateral response.**

"Less than six months ago", he adds, "the world became aware of the emergence in Wuhan of a new corona virus. For a short while, it was regarded only as a health problem which China had the capacity and adequate resources to handle. Subsequently, it became the **global pandemic** known as COVID-19, engulfing with deadly effect Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. To date, the global pandemic has infected 2,471,046 and killed 170,096 and even this now appears to be an underestimate. It is not possible to accurately predict how and when the pandemic will be brought under control.

The pandemic is just beginning to mutate in Africa where public health systems are fragile and poverty makes populations extremely vulnerable. Here as elsewhere people of African descent have suffered disproportionately, particularly in the United States, as minorities and migrants. **Globally dispersed African peoples are seriously at risk in the Caribbean and Latin America.**

The P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Policy Advocacy, expresses its profound sympathy and condolences to the families of the many bereaved including those of deceased frontline staff in medical and emergency services worldwide.

"We commend and encourage continued co-ordination of health protocols to combat the virus across the African continent by the African Union and Ministries and National Centres for disease control supported by the World Health Organization (WHO). This coincides with a similar process taking place in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), with the involvement of CARICOM Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Health in advancing protocols to mitigate and control COVID-19", states the former Jamaican Prime Minister.

Former Prime Minister Patterson also applauds the generosity of the government and people of Cuba in sending hundreds of doctors, nurses and other health experts to countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Italy to be on the front-line in their fight against COVID-19. Cuba's sustained training of its medical and technical personnel and those of other countries, and its scientific research in developing medicines, have enabled it to provide invaluable support to many other countries around the world.

*Calling for an international response to the impact of the global pandemic, "To date", Mr. Patterson notes, "the response has been national in focus, but it is clear this cannot address the international spread of COVID-19.* Multilateralism and the institutions which give tangible expression to this approach are now fragmented and demoralized, consequent on the failure by the most powerful country to realise that putting one's nation first cannot ignore that we all live in a single universe. **This epidemic in the era of globalisation requires international solution**, at a time where there is now a palpable vacuum in global leadership".

In these circumstances, he states, the only thing certain is that the world we knew will no longer exist.

"The world that emerges will be entirely different from the one we all knew. Trade, travel, the workplace, health control, study will never be the same. The reconfiguration of global power and the restructuring of the global economy cannot be left to the market or the dictations of a few, determined to continue to shape the future by unilateral decisions without international consultation. In such a dispensation, the interests of the less developed, less powerful and most vulnerable will not be taken into account unless we take the decision to make our collective voices heard and our interests reflected in the new world order. Pandemics thrive on poverty, ignorance, hunger, stress and social inequities".

Against this background, the Centre holds that it is therefore incumbent on the peoples of African descent to forge through dialogue, a consensus agenda to articulate a vision of a re-ordered world in which their governments and regional organizations have a leadership role. **"The crisis engendered by the COVID-19 virus provides the basis for the urgent mobilization of a trans-global coalition"**, emphasises Mr. Patterson.

Accordingly, the P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy is calling for a dialogue at the level of Heads of Government to agree on a common agenda and initiate a programme of international cooperation among countries in Africa and its global diaspora of people of African descent. The stated objectives are three-fold as follows:

- First, to develop a menu of initiatives for cooperation to supplement the public health strategies being employed to control the impact of the COVID-19 virus.
- Second, establish an institutional dialogue to formulate strategies for effective intervention in the post-pandemic social, economic and political recovery.
- Third, establish and maintain a voice in the design of the future post-pandemic world in a proactive and strategic manner that ensures the centrality of our interests.

**The P.J. Patterson Centre calls on the African Union and CARICOM to:**

- Urgently co-ordinate their policy approaches in the global institutions managing the crisis.
- Attach priority to the availability of water so that the basic efforts to halt the spread can be ensured.
- Extend special attention to food and the development of the agricultural sector as well as protect human rights and well-being of the poorest and most vulnerable groups and countries in this crisis.
- Place greater emphasis on the integration of Science and Technology in their educational systems to support on-line learning and employment.
- Recognize the wealth of therapeutic knowledge within their population, in the processing and use of plants for complementary medicine.
- While we welcome the actions of the IMF for the suspension of official bilateral debt payments for the poorest countries through to the end of 2020, the case is compelling for the debt cancellation to poor countries.
- Lobby international financial institutions to restructure the criteria which eliminate so-called 'middle-income' countries from debt-relief.
- Renew international campaigns for reparative justice against the enslavement of African people and its residual consequences on affected populations in the African Diaspora.

The '**P.J. Patterson Centre**' holds that there is a compelling need for the African Union and CARICOM to act in tandem in the international organizations to ensure that the regions' and rights and interests of their peoples, especially women, children and persons with disabilities, are actively defended.

"The prompt and pre-emptive actions taken by many countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean are to be commended, especially many led by women, whose actions in response to the pandemic have saved thousands of lives" Mr. Patterson states.

In the current context of a global health and economic crisis, the **P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Policy Advocacy** calls on CARICOM and the AU to actively combat global racism wherever in the world this is manifested, and to promote a deeper understanding of the historical processes that have engendered poverty and social injustice on our Planet Earth.

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**CONTACT:** Debra Hamilton

**TEL:** (876)997-4798 **EMAIL:** dhamilton@heisconsults.com