STATEMENT AND PLAN OF ACTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICA - AFRICAN UNION - CARIBBEAN - DIASPORA CONFERENCE

1. Africans from the Continent and representatives of the Diaspora from the Caribbean gathered at the Jamaica International Conference Center, Kingston, Jamaica on 16-18 March 2005, for a Conference jointly organized by the African Union and the governments of South Africa and Jamaica, with the theme “Towards Unity and United Action by Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a Better World: The Case of South Africa”.

2. The objective of the Conference was to celebrate the centuries old historical and cultural bonds and re-affirm the spiritual affinity between Africa and the Diaspora based on a common history and shared experiences; create linkages between Africa and the Diaspora; establish mechanisms for building stronger political and economic relations between Africa and the Caribbean; acknowledge the significant contribution of the Caribbean to the Pan-African tradition; and develop an agenda for confronting common challenges in order to support the implementation of the African Union decisions on the African Diaspora.

3. The gathering recognized and paid tribute to the visionary role played by successive generations of Pan-Africanists from the Diaspora and the Continent in the affirmation of a common identity.

4. The Conference confirmed the continued relevance of the vision that guided the Pan-Africanists in their determination to promote unity, solidarity and cooperation among the people of Africa and the Diaspora as well as the spirit of the 5th Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945, which underscored the right of all peoples to freedom and to govern themselves without any restriction from any foreign power, and to control their own destiny and to be free from imperialist control.

5. The Conference recalled the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union of February 2003 to invite and encourage the participation of the Diaspora in the activities of the African Union as an important part of the continent, as well as the decision of the Executive Council in Sun City, South Africa, in October 2003, and other relevant decisions and initiatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) / African Union, including the decisions of the African Union First Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora held in Dakar, Senegal in October 2004.

6. The Conference further recalled that the gathering was the result of the initiative by the government of South Africa to acknowledge the contribution of the Diaspora in the Caribbean (including the labour movement) in the struggle against Apartheid. The Conference was also an opportunity to celebrate the ten years of democracy in South Africa.

7. The Conference gained a new appreciation of the creative way in which the Rastafarian movement had sustained the vision of the Founders of the OAU, and promoted an African-Caribbean identity and Afro-centric values that strengthened the impulse for African liberation on both sides of the Atlantic, while serving as a positive force for Africa globally.

8. The Conference recognized the fundamental role played by artists and other cultural activists in the liberation struggles and called for closer collaboration among these actors in the two regions. Conference recommended that the African Union support the planned commemoration of the 50th Anniversary in 2006 of the Congress of Black Writers that was first held in Paris, France, in 1956.
9. The Conference expressed its solidarity with the independence struggle of the people of Curacao and all other peoples of the Continent and the Caribbean who are still living under colonial rule, as well as those who are occupied or threatened by invasion, especially the Republic of Cuba. In this spirit, Conference called for the lifting of the US-imposed blockade on the Republic of Cuba.

10. The Conference further expressed its concern over the deeply troubled situation in Haiti given that it is the oldest, independent African state in the “New World”, and called on the African Union and CARICOM to help the people of Haiti find lasting solutions to their country’s crisis. The Conference commended the role of CARICOM and the African Union in rising to the cause of the Haitian people from the outset of the current crisis, including the sanctuary provided to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by the governments of Jamaica and South Africa.

11. In its consideration of the Report of the United Nations High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the Conference commended the Continent for establishing a Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations, ‘The Ezulwini Consensus’; noted that CARICOM is currently considering their position on the report and that and the African Union encourages Caribbean states to lend their support to the recommendation of the High Level Panel regarding United Nations Security Council reform, including the allocation to Africa of five non-permanent seats and two Permanent Security Council seats, with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, including the right of veto.

12. Participants at the Conference, in their discussions in plenary sessions and the various working groups, made important observations and recommendations, the highlights of which include the following:

Communication, Education, Science and Technology

a) Knowledge production and sharing through the effective use of the available technology in order to ‘break down’ the barriers of ignorance and foster continuous dialogue between the Continent and the African Diaspora;
b) The need for the African Union and the CARICOM to formulate alternative media and communication models to effectively communicate with each other and the world at large, and to create an effective outreach strategy to disseminate their policies, positive images, programmes and ideas;
c) Sharing and promotion of the knowledge of history, especially among the youth, through all learning institutions;
d) Development of a data bank of experts and research institutions in Africa and the Caribbean, and encourage collaboration among these role players;
e) Use of science and technology as a tool of integration and development. Cooperation in the area of science and technology should be explored with the view to establishing centers of excellence for the mutual benefit of the Caribbean and African peoples, and as a basis for developing and creating opportunities for the absorption of human capital for the advantage of both regions;

Economy, Trade and Regional Integration

f) Support for the efforts of CARICOM to accelerate its integration process, especially in the implementation of the Single Market and Economy, the facilitation of the freedom of movement of peoples among its Member States and the co-ordination of the foreign policies of its Member States;
g) Expansion of stakeholder involvement in integration to include all relevant players including civil society, youth structures, faith-based groups, labour unions and the private sector.
h) Eradication of trade barriers and the promotion of investment between Africa and the Caribbean, pursuing robust policies of trade diversification, and building strategies for overcoming
the legacy of colonial commercial policy (in order to imbue national, sub-regional and regional policies with a greater autonomy);  
i) Recognition of the development potential of strategic cooperation between Africa and the Diaspora, the expansion of resource sharing, acknowledging the contribution of migrant remittances as an economic resource;  

Society, Women, and History  
j) The need for further dialogue between Africa and the Diaspora to establish and sustain a common position on the issue of reparations as well as a mechanism for its implementation;  
k) The Rastafari and other movements have served as cultural forces of integration in both the Caribbean and Africa. Their status as agents of sustaining and promoting an African-Caribbean identity and an Afro-centric value system should be recognized as a positive force of integration.  
l) The struggle for and the establishment of free communities by Maroons in the Americas, especially in Jamaica and Suriname; and the role that Maroon communities have played in preserving and promoting the African-Caribbean value system and traditional knowledge. The Conference urges putting in place a mechanism to protect the traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights of Maroon communities;  
m) The need for a concerted effort to profile women leaders in Africa and the Caribbean (from antiquity to the present) in order to raise awareness about the rich history of women’s leadership in Africa;  
n) The importance of creating an enabling and empowering environment for women’s emancipation and gender equality  
o) The need to empower the legislatures in Africa and the Diaspora by equipping them to play effective law making and oversight roles and to ensure that they create space for meaningful public participation as well as to encourage sharing of best practice experiences across the two regions.  

Solidarity  
p) The need to acknowledge the solidarity and support of the Cuban government in the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. The continuing Cuban offer of solidarity with countries of the South should also be acknowledged.  

Multilateralism  
q) The need for African and the Caribbean countries to co-ordinate their work within multilateral institutions, including pooling their resources and sharing technical expertise;  
r) The inseparable nature of security and the development agendas and the need to comprehensively address poverty eradication and debt cancellation and the centrality of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security;  
s) The need for Africa and the Caribbean to continue working together with a view to ensuring that the final outcomes of the consideration of the Report of the United Nations High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change as well as the Sachs Report are consistent with the attainment of the NEPAD and Millennium Development Goals and the safeguarding and advancement of the collective interests of their peoples;  
t) The need for an effective reform of all the organs of the United Nations, in particular, the strengthening of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as equally important organs in driving the international development and security agendas;  

Follow-up  
u) The institutionalization of linkages between CARICOM and the African Union, and reinforcing ties and forging a symbiotic relationship between Africa and the Caribbean people in addressing common challenges, while endeavouring to speak with one voice on those issues;  
v) African and Caribbean states to ensure that they institute appropriate policy instruments to facilitate the interconnectedness between peoples of the Continent and the Diaspora in all spheres of life;
w) The need for an African-Caribbean Conference of this nature to be held on a biennial basis in rotation between the two regions, and recommends that the African Union should convene the next one in Africa;

13. Against this background, the Conference committed itself to the following Programme of Action:

a) That the African Union and CARICOM should continue to develop a concrete mechanism for the institutionalization of the relations between the two bodies;
b) That African and Caribbean governments should explore and develop concrete measures for promoting linkages between the two regions in the following priority areas: trade and investment, science and technology, travel and tourism, education and culture, health, and environmental issues;
c) That African and Caribbean organs of civil society should explore and develop concrete measures for promoting linkages and collaboration between the two regions;
d) That Africa and the Caribbean, through their regional organizations, should explore ways of harmonizing international diplomacy in particular by utilizing the forthcoming UN Millennium Review Summit and the WTO Doha Development Round, to advance the agenda set out in this Declaration;

14. The Conference expressed its appreciation to the government and people of Jamaica for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to all the participants.

15. The Conference also expressed an appreciation to the African Union and the governments of South Africa and Jamaica, for co-organizing this gathering. It also recognized with appreciation the high-level of representation at the gathering by CARICOM.