

## INTRODUCTION

### Definition of African Diaspora

The African Union defines the African Diaspora as “consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality, and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union.”

The African Union’s constitutive act declares that it shall “invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union.”

The strategic importance of the African Diaspora to South Africa and the rest of Africa is a product of particularly four factors that shaped contemporary Africa – namely:

- ξ the Trans-Atlantic slave trade;
- ξ colonial rule;
- ξ the anti-colonial struggle;
- ξ and Pan-Africanism.

Objectively, however, the Diaspora can be defined in terms other than Pan-African consciousness and activism, as illustrated in Table 1.

*Table 1: Geographic Distribution and Comparative Weight of African Diaspora*

Diaspora region	Key country	Population number	Generations	State actor	Status
North America	USA		Descendents and immigrants	No	Excluded and marginalized
Latin America	Brazil		Descendents	No	Excluded and marginalized
Caribbean	Most		Descendents	Yes	Excluded and marginalized
Europe	UK and France		Immigrants	No	Excluded and marginalized
Asia and Middle East	India		Descendents and immigrants	No	Excluded and marginalized

A number of conclusions can be drawn from reading Table 1, namely that:

- ξ The largest concentration of the Diaspora is in the Americas and the Caribbean;
- ξ Diaspora immigrants are in parts of North America and constitute a dominant Diaspora presence in Europe and Asia and the Middle East and;
- ξ That Diaspora communities are generally excluded and marginalized in their respective countries, with a section of those in the Caribbean the only ones in possession of the state machinery.

Therefore, compared to other Diaspora communities such as the Indian, Chinese and the Jewish, the African Diaspora is relatively weak both in political and economic terms. The continent's engagement with this constituency should take this into account. For example, large shipments of capital from the Diaspora should not be expected; nor is the African Diaspora in a position to decisively exercise geopolitical might in favor of the mother continent.

These objective difficulties, however, should not suggest that the Diaspora is an insignificant motive force in the building of a better world and the realization of the African Renaissance. Indeed, the Diaspora stands to gain from a just and better world, and an Africa that is prosperous and a significant force in global affairs.

Although Africa's engagement with its Diaspora has a long history, dating back to the Atlantic slave trade and the beginning of the Pan-African movement, it was with the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the AU that this engagement received a new impetus.

The African Union decided to make the African Diaspora its sixth region and to involve the two target groups that comprise the Diaspora, i.e. historic Africans and expatriate Africans that are located through out the world. The objective is to create partnerships politically, economically and socially in the quest to strengthen the African continent.

African countries are adapting the African Plan of Action on the African Diaspora individually and collectively. They seek to mobilise the Diaspora for intellectual and technical resources, increasing market access, and promoting infrastructure investment and development. Mechanisms to realise these goals include creation of databases and support of existing networks to ensure appropriate linkages and regional conferences.

### **AFRICAN DIASPORA IN SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

President Thabo Mbeki emphasised the importance of the African Diaspora during the African Union Summit in Maputo in 2003 and urged the summit to explore and develop “an elaboration of a practical programme of action to take this matter of the African Diaspora forward”. In his address at the University of the West Indies on 30 June 2003, President Mbeki said, “Over the last few years, we have made bold to speak about an African Renaissance. We have also spoken of the need for us as Africans to ensure that the 21st becomes an African century. In reality, I stand here today to talk about what we might do together to accomplish these goals, understanding that when we speak of an African Renaissance, we speak of a rebirth that must encompass all Africans, both in Africa and the African Diaspora.”

The African Renaissance project, is about the promotion of democracy on the continent; the eradication of violent conflicts; advancing Africa's development, and combating underdevelopment, poverty, diseases and illiteracy; protecting and affirming African culture; and enhancing Africa's global standing. Africa, of course, has to lead in the realisation of this African Renaissance agenda, but certainly not without partners outside the continent. Here, like with the objective of building a better world, the Diaspora can make an invaluable contribution both as civil society agents and state actors.

Accordingly, the *Protocol on the Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union* proposes in Article 3(q) an additional objective of the AU which is to “invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union”.

Whereas this Protocol is yet to enter into force, member states have already taken decisions at both Summit and Executive Council levels, to give effect to this proposal. The AU and some member states, including South Africa, are now actively involved in engaging the Diaspora.

At the level of the AU, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), is driving the Diaspora agenda, targeting civil society agents. There are provisions in the ECOSOCC Statute for Diaspora participation in the structures and activities of the organ. A co-ordination mechanism has been established in the various Diaspora regions for the facilitation of this participation.

South Africa, Senegal, Nigeria and Libya have been the most visible in engagement with the Diaspora, targeting both civil society agents and state actors. South Africa's commitment to the African Diaspora was clearly demonstrated by its contribution to the South Africa African Union, Caribbean Diaspora Conference held in Jamaica on 16-18 March 2005 (1<sup>st</sup> RSA-AU-CARRICOM). The inaugural meeting was held under the theme "Towards Unity and United Action of Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a Better World: The Case of South Africa".

Besides the RSA-AU-CARRICOM Conference, Senegal has been in the forefront of the organization of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of African Intellectuals and the Diaspora; this year Nigeria hosted jointly with Brazil, a forum for African and South American countries.

On the part of Diaspora actors, governments have been less visible in the engagement with the continent; it is civil society agents have been more active. Notwithstanding the historic role actors such as the Rastafarian movement, the Reparations campaign and the United Nation's Durban Racism Conference have provided the Diaspora with energy, platform, and purpose in the engagement with the continent.

South Africa's commitment to the African Diaspora project was reinforced in the State of Nation Address of 2005. Again, President Mbeki indicated that South Africa was privileged to host President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti and his family and thus fulfilling its responsibility to Africa and the African Diaspora. In this regard, he stated, "to contribute to efforts aimed at ensuring that the people of Haiti know peace and prosperity, we are working with the African Union, the Caribbean Community and the United Nations to normalize the situation in Haiti."

South Africa is now preparing for hosting the second conference; this submission is a brief to parliament as well as an appraisal on how far South Africa's engagement with the African Diaspora matter thus far. Further, it is intended that the submission will generate responses on how best the proposed conference can be harnessed towards building stronger Africa-Diaspora relations and enhancing the impact of other Africa-Diaspora engagement initiatives.

**The Diaspora as a motive force is a crosscutting player in the matrix of alliance (Table 2) informing South Africa's approach to the world.**

Table 2: Matrix of Alliance

Alliance category	Constituencies	Key mobilisation issues
Liberation	ξ National Liberation Movement	The Pan-African project and transformation of the global system.
Solidarity	ξ Other historic allies	A better Africa and the world.
	ξ Tiermondists	
	ξ Anti-globalisation movement	
Globalisation	ξ Some Socialist International forces	Meeting the MDGs; debt relief; reform of the global system; making globalisation work for all.
	Other progressive forces	

The constituencies in Table 2 matrix are both governments and civil society, and spread across multilateral bodies such as the UN and the G8. Many in the Diaspora consider themselves part of the Pan-African project, and many more are in the ranks of the progressive and anti-globalization movements.

**In this context, engaging the Diaspora can be focused around six priority areas:**

- ξ The economy, particularly the promotion of capital flow to the continent;
- ξ Diaspora tourism flow into the continent;
- ξ Diaspora skills attraction and human resources development on the continent;
- ξ Cultural and information exchange, including joint Africa-Diaspora knowledge production initiatives; building strong inter-state partnerships with the Diaspora through bilateral relations and South-South co-operation and;
- ξ Promoting strong and active Africa-Diaspora cooperation in the international system and multilateral forums. The RSA-AU-CARRICOM Conference held in 2005 is one vehicle that has helped realize this agenda.

**ADVANTAGES OF CREATING A LINKAGES WITH THE DIASPORA**

Bilateral benefits for South Africa that can accrue from the African Diaspora relationships include:

- ξ Strengthened historical and cultural ties;
- ξ Expanded trade opportunities and
- ξ Increased tourism.
- ξ Inroads can also be made with regard to skills exchanges in the fields of education, healthcare, science and technology, music and foreign direct investment, all being central aspects of the Accelerated and Shared Growth
- ξ Multilateral benefits include increased cooperation between the AU and CARICOM in specific areas identified for collaboration, as elaborated in the program of action.

## REVISTING THE SOUTH AFRICA-AFRICAN UNION-CARIBBEAN - DIASPORA CONFERENCE – 2005 AND OTHER INITIATIVES

### The objectives of the 2005 Conference and other initiatives were:

- ξ 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;
- ξ Create linkages between Africa and the Diaspora;
- ξ Establish mechanisms for building stronger political and economic relations between Africa and the Caribbean;
- ξ Acknowledge the significant contribution of the Caribbean to the Pan-African tradition and;
- ξ Develop an agenda for confronting common challenges in order to support the implementation of the African Union decisions on the African Diaspora.

A comparative outcome of the various initiatives undertaken thus far are contained in Table 3

*Table 3: Comparative Diaspora Conference Initiatives*

Diaspora initiative	Lead actors	Process	Target	Outcome	Follow-up
RSA-AU-CARRICOM	RSA, AU, Jamaica	RSA-AU-Jamaica Steering Committee	Civil society, governments, AU, CARRICOM	Conference Declaration with a Program of Action; Report which is yet to be published.	South Africa to host 2 <sup>nd</sup> Conference.
				South Africa	

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CIAD I	Senegal, AU, Libya?	AU Consultative Working Group of intellectuals	Civil society, particularly intellectuals.	Report which was not adopted by conference.	Disagreement on follow-up mechanism; Senegal wanted to create a permanent Secretariat
CIAD II	Senegal, AU, Brazil	AU-Brazil multi-stakeholder Steering Committee	Civil society; intellectuals; Afro-Brazilians.	Conference Declaration; Report still to be finalized.	Steering Committee to be constituted by AU; Senegal still wants Secretariat.
South American Community of Nations and AU	Nigeria and Brazil?				

The Program of Action emanating from the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference follows:

#### PROGRAM 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 multilateral diplomacy and in particular, utilizing the forthcoming UN Millennium Review Summit and the WTO Doha Development Round, to advance the African agenda

#### **HOST AND PARTNERS**

South Africa's hosting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AU African Diaspora Conference was endorsed at the AU Summit held in Khartoum in January of 2006.

All the regions of the diaspora which include, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Asia and the Middle East will be consulted and invited to participate and play a role in the Conference.

The following are the principal partners in the organisation of this conference:

The African Union Commission;

The South African Government;

CARICOM

Although it was recommended that the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting be held on the scale of a summit at the level of Heads of State. Thus far the modalities for the hosting of the summit have not been finalised. In the interests of hosting a meeting that maybe able to produce streamlined projects with measurable outcomes. The possibility of hosting the meeting on the scale of a conference at Ministerial level is recommended. Further it is uncertain whether a large-scale summit will provide the impetus necessary to launch African

Diaspora projects. A smaller, more focused conference may accomplish this more effectively and be used as a stepping stone towards a larger meeting at summit level in 2009.

### **CONFERENCE PROPOSAL FOR THE SOUTH AFRICA-AFRICAN UNION-CARIBBEAN - DIASPORA CONFERENCE – 2007**

The suggested theme of the 2007 Diaspora

#### **ξ Towards the realisation of a united and integrated Africa: A shared vision of Development.**

Preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> RSA-AU-CARRICOM Conference should be oriented towards a concrete outcomes and follow-up. In this respect, multi-stakeholder Working Groups should be constituted from the three partners, focusing around the following four themes:

- ξ Intellectual capital and human resources development
- ξ Economy, trade and tourism
- ξ Identity, cultural and information exchange
- ξ Geo-strategic partnership

Each of the four Working Groups should sit at least twice before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference and work towards the development of a paper around the allocated theme containing an analysis of the challenges and concrete steps to take. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference will be organized around the themes of the four Working Groups and their respective outcome.

#### **SCOPE AND PARTICIPANTS**

This Conference is a continuation of the dialogue that was initiated at the South Africa, African Union and the Caribbean Conference. Participants will include, but are not limited to:

- ξ Ministers and Parliamentarians
- ξ Business people
- ξ Academics
- ξ Civil Society and NGOs
- ξ Media
- ξ Regions of the African Diaspora

## **VENUE, DATES AND DURATION**

Suggested Venue: Sandton Convention Centre, South Africa

Suggested Date :Last quarter of 2007

Duration: 3 days

## **PARTICIPATION COST**

Application and registration fees for each participation

All participants will pay for their travel and accommodation

## **CONCLUSION**

The Pan-African project evolved in the context of the anti-colonial struggles, and came to entail four elements: a sense among Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora of themselves as “one” people because of common historical experience and destiny; the quest for the “regeneration”, “awakening” or “renaissance” of Africa on the social, cultural and economic fronts as well as in global affairs; the “dream’ of an Africa united in social, cultural, economic and political spheres; and the spirit of solidarity among people of African descent.

The engagement with the Diaspora, in this context, is not only part of the implementation of the objective of building a better a world, but also fits into the African Renaissance project. Contributing to the building of a better should entail confronting systemic inequalities at the international level, particularly in the ownership and distribution of resources and power (including weapons of mass destruction), and striving towards the

transformation of multilateral organs of global governance. The Diaspora, as both as civil society agents and state actors, is one motive force that is also committed to building a better world. The 1<sup>st</sup> Conference contributed to the attainment of this objective. It is envisaged that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference will provide the momentum to the process of building a better world.

Media  
Regions of the African Diaspora

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