



**Asamblea de los Pueblos del Caribe  
Assembly of Caribbean People  
Assemblée du Peuple Caraïbe  
Assemblee van het Caraïbisch Volk  
Asamble Pep Karayib La**

**VIII ASSEMBLY OF CARIBBEAN PEOPLE**

**AUGUST 15-18, 2019**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, ST. AUGUSTINE**

**TRINIDAD**

**FINAL DECLARATION**

In August 1994, in response to “A Message of Urgency” participants from throughout the Caribbean gathered in Chaguaramas, Trinidad in the First Assembly of Caribbean People. Our Theme then was “Towards the Sovereignty of the Region and the Welfare of our Peoples”. Twenty five years later, we gathered once again in Trinidad for the VIII Assembly of Caribbean People.

From August 15-18 more than 100 participants from 13 countries discussed many issues under the Theme “Confronting the Imperialist Agenda, the Resistance and Unity of our Peoples have been strengthened through The Assembly of Caribbean People”.

On this the Silver Jubilee of the Assembly we celebrated the existence of this important regional institution; this vital and indispensable mechanism for the integration of the peoples of the Caribbean; this indestructible weapon that forges our unity in our resistance to the imperialist agenda. The Assembly paid homage to John LaRose, Trinidadian poet, essayist and political activist who in 1987 conceived the germ of the idea that became The Assembly in 1994. We recognized Caribbean fighters for freedom and social justice: CLR James, Jacqueline Creft, Norman Girvan, Lolita Lebron, Marcus Garvey, Sonia Pierre, Fernando Martinez-Heredia because our efforts and victories are possible only because of the contributions of those who have gone before us.

We paid tribute to those who have kept the flame of the Assembly alight, the countries, organisations and members of the Regional Executive Committee and in particular, the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union that took on the historic responsibility of bringing the Assembly into existence. We especially applauded with our deepest appreciation the participants to this VIII Assembly who made tremendous sacrifices to be here in Trinidad. This is a manifestation of commitment to the idea of the Assembly and in recognition that only through our unity and integration will we have the strength to resist the aggressive imperialist agenda that confronts us today.

From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when the Caribbean was forcibly incorporated into the emerging globalized economy by European conquest, we have had to confront, resist and struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Our resistance has been underpinned by our indomitable spirit, the human spirit to be free of all the shackles – physical, institutional and mental – that colonialism and imperialism have sought to impose on us. Our heroic struggles from:

- The Haitian Revolution that ended slavery in that country and created the first Independent nation in Our Caribbean;
- Through to the Cuban Revolution which has been a beacon for us in the Caribbean and demonstrated that “another world is possible”;
- And all the popular struggles through the decades by workers, farmers, women and youth that have resulted in: tremendous social gains; the winning of political independence; and the emergence of a Caribbean civilisation

are the foundations upon which this Assembly of Caribbean People is being constructed.

While we celebrated our journey out of slavery, through indentureship and up to freedom, participants in this VIII Assembly of Caribbean People were acutely aware of the grave dangers that our region and our peoples face today.

- Capitalism in this era of globalization is rapacious. Wealth and income has never been so unequal – between countries and within countries. Neo-liberal policies have been designed to ensure that capital can be accumulated at a rapid rate and that the benefits of this is concentrated in only a few corporations. This process of capital accumulation and concentration is fueled by the role of finance capital. Finance capital is no longer used

primarily for investment in the productive sector, it is engaged in speculative activities: bond, currency, stock, and commodity trading. This casino capitalism has created a class of multi-billionaires whose philosophy is “greed is good”. At the same time, hundreds of millions have been pushed into poverty. We in the Caribbean have not escaped neo-liberalism and our people are suffering the consequences.

- The crisis of debt, which crisis is the creation of capitalism and of the unequal terms of trade that underpins that system which undervalues the goods and services that we produce while forcing us to purchase at high prices the producers in global north. The crisis of debt has been exacerbated by the neo-liberal policies of the Washington Consensus (the IMF, World Bank, IADB and the US State Department) that are imposed through conditionalities and onerous interest payments for loans.
- The restructuring of our societies such that the state is no longer responsible for the well-being of its citizens, as manifest by the privatization of education, health care, transportation, water, electricity services among other basic needs. Our women, youth and the aged are particularly impacted on by these neo-liberal policies, where only those with money can meet their basic needs as human beings. In this restructuring, trade unions are under attack and in some cases are being eliminated leaving workers totally vulnerable to exploitation as precarious work becomes the dominant employment arrangement, thus taking us back to the old plantations system. In the absence of the state, a vacuum has been created in many of our communities which has been filled by the gangs and others involved in illegal activities, such that there now exists states within states.
- One implication of this restructuring is that of migration as our people seek a better life by moving to those countries – within and outside the region – seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Our Caribbean has always been characterized by migration. Indeed, our societies have been founded as a result of the need for labour that was not indigenous to the region: slavery, indentureship. Migration is therefore natural for us. What is new, however, is that because of neo-liberalism, workers everywhere are increasingly insecure – of their jobs and of their very future. They are therefore extremely vulnerable to messages that paint migrants as “the enemy” when in fact the enemy is not their fellow workers. In this scenario, right wing nationalism has emerged as a potent force using racism and xenophobia as its principal raving call.

- Climate change is wreaking havoc on our environment, our economies and the lives of our people. Sea water rise, more frequent and more powerful storms and hurricanes, the dying of our coral reefs which protect our shores and support marine life, are but some of the destructive impacts of global warming and climate change. Neo-liberal policies have added to this existential threat to our existence. Indiscriminate mining, deforestation, the implementation of mega-projects that promote development that is unsustainable are being advanced by governments that pursue neo-liberalism and defend the interests of transnational and big local capital rather than the interests of our people.
- In spite of the valiant struggles of our sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe and Martinique, among others, colonialism remains deeply entrenched in our region. The United States and European powers such as Britain, France and Holland, seeking their selfish economic and geo-political interests, have refused to relinquish their control over our lands. As a result our people are denied their right to self-determination and are frustrated in their desire to be free, independent and expressive of their own identity as Caribbean people.
- Even as our people battle to preserve our sovereignty we are confronted with the most aggressive attacks by imperialism. The rise of right wing, neo-fascism as the political face of neo-liberalism has meant that progressive movements, parties and governments have been subjected to intense attack and sieges. Social movement leaders have been harassed, jailed and assassinated; their organisations pilloried in the media that is controlled by these very right wing forces; trade unions are facing elimination; and protest criminalized. Regime change by any means is the strategy of US imperialism – from constitutional coup d’etats in Honduras in Central America to Paraguay in the south; from lawfare and coup d’etat in Brazil to the fomentation of paramilitary forces to engage in civil war in Venezuela. The Trump regime in the US has adopted the most vicious means to achieve regime change: the illegal and criminal blockade against Cuba has been tightened; and a blockade imposed on Venezuela. Third countries such as those in CARICOM that engage in legal and legitimate economic relations with Cuba and Venezuela are now themselves threatened with sanctions in total violation with every international norm. This bullying tactic has also been demonstrated in the Organisation of American States by the US and

Canada supported by the right wing of Latin America and some Caribbean governments.

In the face of these grave threats, the Caribbean people stand resolute in defense of our sovereignty, our independence and identity and in the struggle for a better life for all. We reject neo-liberalism in all its forms and manifestations. We oppose the imperialist agenda that seeks to subjugate our region and our people. We say that every Caribbean country that is colonized is an anachronism 215 years after the Haitian Revolution won independence.

We therefore:

- Demand the immediate removal of the illegal blockade of Venezuela by US imperialism and release of all of Venezuela's assets illegally seized/frozen by the Trump Administration and other western governments
- Support the Montevideo Mechanism and the initiatives of CARICOM and the Government of Norway to secure a negotiated and peaceful resolution of the Venezuelan situation
- Affirm that the Caribbean must be a Zone of Peace in accordance with the decisions of the Heads of States and Governments at the II Summit of CELAC in Havana in 2015 and by the Heads of Government of CARICOM
- Demand the immediate removal of the illegal, criminal blockade of Cuba and condemn the recent implementation by the Trump Administration of Title III of the Helms-Burton Law
- Condemn the recent attempt by US imperialism to bring about regime change by a coup d'etat against the democratically elected Sandinista Government in Nicaragua
- Express our solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico in their recent struggle and in their demand for independence; and call on the US to end all forms of injustice and forcing the people to pay the illegitimate debt that will reduce the delivery of basic social services.
- Support the independence of all colonial territories in the Caribbean
- Demand reparations for the people of Haiti from France that imposed an illegitimate debt on Haiti for daring to become independent and end slavery; as well as reparations for the destruction to Haiti and the loss of life caused by the occupation of MINUSTAH troops
- Demand the immediate freeing of Lula who has been wrongfully imprisoned on trumped up charges and convicted by an unjust court as part of the attack

by the right wing on the progressive forces in Brazil and to prevent him from contesting the last presidential elections

- Express our support for Afro-descendants in our region in this the decade of Afro-descendants and demand that our Governments pursue vigorously reparations from the colonial powers for the crime against humanity of slavery
- Convey our solidarity to the First Peoples of the Caribbean who have endured the act of genocide by the European colonisers; and who today are fighting to ensure that they are treated with respect and dignity and that their rights as a people are recognized and protected
- Express our solidarity with all those who are fighting against neo-liberalism – workers, farmers, fisherfolk, our women and youth; and in particular state that we stand with the Oilfields Workers’ Trade Union in their fight for justice for oilworkers in Trinidad and Tobago

In Furtherance of our Declaration, we Commit to the Following Actions:

1. To take actions in our respective countries on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – the 500<sup>th</sup> day of imprisonment of Lula demanding his immediate release from jail
2. To establish a mechanism to address the issue of migration in the region
3. To establish a Volunteer Brigade of Caribbean Solidarity that would actively engage in combatting the fake news and false narratives of imperialism, beginning with the immediate task of solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution of Venezuela
4. To participate in the III Meeting of Caribbean Revolutionary Groups to be held in the Dominican Republic from October 19-20 on the Theme “ The Social Reality of the Caribbean and the necessity of the solidarity of our Peoples”
5. To continue the process of dialogue and resistance developed in this VIII Assembly of Caribbean People by participating in the Anti-Imperialist Encounter of Solidarity and for Democracy and against Neo-liberalism” to be held in Havana, Cuba from November 1-3, 2019
6. That each of the organisations and activists present will popularize the very important issues discussed in this Assembly and summarised in the Assembly documents by engaging in political education by communication with their membership, to their communities and to the people of their

countries through both the traditional and social media; the holding of seminars, workshops and meetings of all kinds and mobilizing broad sections of their countries to take actions consistent with the decisions of the Assembly

This VIII Assembly of Caribbean People unanimously agrees to work towards sustaining the Assembly process by:

- Seeking to broaden the membership of the Regional Executive Committee by including representatives of Caribbean regional networks of women, farmers, youth, environmental and First Peoples;
- Assembling in the historic land of Haiti in the IX Assembly of Caribbean People in 2021!

August 18, 2019.

St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago