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July 1, 2019

Ambassador Irwin La Rocque
Secretary General
Caribbean Community Secretariat
Turkeyen
Greater Georgetown
Guyana

Your Excellency:

I am writing in hopes that the upcoming 40th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in St. Lucia will take up the issue of Haiti's deep political crisis and the suffering of Haiti's impoverished majority who are making their voices and demands heard in mass protests. I urge the Organization to do all it can to promote democracy and respect for human rights in Haiti at this hour of great need. Although I am American, I say "I am Haitian at heart" just like the great internationalist solidarity leader Frederick Douglass. And like millions then and now around the world Douglas recognized Haiti as the historical exemplar of grassroots democracy against tyranny and oppression.

I am proud to share CARICOM's respect for Haiti as the birthplace of freedom, in the Caribbean but also the world. We all owe Haitians an endless debt for the sacrifices they have endured—not just in establishing the first Black Republic in 1804, but for courageously and persistently preserving their freedom for over two centuries in a world that has too often been hostile to their example of taking Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for all seriously. Caribbean great CLR James wrote in *Black Jacobins*, the great history of the Haitian revolution: "The transformation of slaves, trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle and achievement."

One of the many successes of Haitians' centuries-long struggle is the freedom and prosperity that many of us outside of Haiti enjoy. While Haitians needed to win independence all by themselves in 1804, in our times we can start repaying our debt by putting our power together to support their continuing struggle for a return to democracy, one that was disrupted by the 2004 coup d'état.

When Haitian elites and the international community threatened Haiti's democracy and eventually overthrew Haiti's elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, I felt that my personal debt to Haitians compelled me to travel to Haiti, to inquire about the situation, and to

join the movement to support the restoration of democracy. It was inspiring—to me and to others in the movement in Haiti and the United States—to see CARICOM’s principled insistence on its democratic principles as it responded to that crisis, despite substantial pressure from governments that were more powerful and more willing to forgo their espoused commitment to democracy. CARICOM’s refusal to compromise on Haitians’ fundamental human rights played an essential role in re-establishing Haiti’s democratic order.

In April of this year, events in Haiti once again compelled me to travel to Haiti, this time on a delegation led by U.S. Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Our delegation met with grassroots pro-democracy leaders, victims of human rights violations, students, and political leaders including former President Aristide. We heard first-hand about well-planned government-linked brutality against neighborhoods considered too supportive of democracy, including large scale killings, sexual assaults and destruction of houses. We heard about the impact of the massive government corruption and economic mismanagement that has diverted billions away from desperately-needed government services and imposed staggering economic misery on people who were already suffering far too much. We met with representatives of the International Community who told us not to believe our eyes and ears. We held a press conference where obviously fearful journalists asked us why the world was ignoring Haiti’s crisis.

Our Haitian brothers and sisters are once again putting their lives on the line in the struggle for freedom. Their eventual victory is assured, because Haitians will, as always, not stop fighting for democracy until they prevail. But they also will, as always, pay a high price of death, destruction and misery in the meantime. We who are inspired by and benefitted from Haitians’ historic struggle can reduce this price, by working together and bringing whatever we can to the struggle.

I sincerely hope that CARICOM will engage with Haiti’s crisis when meeting in St. Lucia. I would feel greatly privileged to collaborate with your efforts in any way I can to be helpful.



Sincerely,
Danny Glover