



***CTUSAB Statement on Constitutional Reform
Delivered on May Day 2022
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Constitutional Reform Working Group***

First, the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB) congratulates all the workers in the various sectors of the economy for their sterling productive efforts over the years, but especially over the past two to three years in keeping Barbados afloat during this testing time of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We also express our deepest condolences to the families of deceased workers and other victims of this deadly and disruptive disease. May they rest in peace.

The Congress avails itself of this opportunity to fully support the island's move from a monarchical democracy to a Republic and looks forward to the active participation of workers and citizens during the constitution reform deliberations.

This move to republican status was set in motion by the Owen Arthur administration with the establishment of a Commission headed by Sir Henry deB. Forde in 2005 to investigate the opinions of Barbadians on governance.

In 2016, when Barbados celebrated its 50th year of independence, then Prime Minister Freundel Stuart announced that Barbados would become a republic by 30th November. That promise did not materialize.

In September 2021 a bill was laid in Parliament with the objective of altering the 1966 *Constitution* in order “*to provide for Barbados to become a republic with a President who shall be Head of State of Barbados; and to provide for related matters*”.

On November 30th 2021, our Prime Minister, the Rt. Honourable Mia Amor Mottley described this Freedom Park as (and I quote) “*the place where our modern democracy was born,*” and further as “*the place that led to the formation of trade unions in this country, I say to you today that we make no apology for putting labour first*”. Labour must therefore be a primary player at all levels of governance and development especially at the national level in shaping or crafting the fate of our workers, citizens and nation.

It is from this same place that CTUSAB as the National Trade Union Centre asserts that if the new Republican Constitution for Barbados is to meet the demands of a modern state in a dynamic global environment, contributions are required from all stakeholders at different levels of the spectrum. Since all citizens must abide by the rules and obligations outlined in the constitution, all citizens should demand involvement in deciding the terms of the new constitution and insist upon processes of legitimizing a document that is inclusive and democratic when changes are to be made.

In our attempt to create a constitution that not only meets the demands of a modern state, but also anticipates future challenges to and opportunities for “branding Barbados globally,” CTUSAB advises that the UNDP’s six core principles should be embraced namely to:

- Seize the opportunity for peacebuilding
- Encourage compliance with international norms and standards.
- Ensure national ownership.
- Support inclusivity, participation, and transparency.
- Mobilize and coordinate a wide range of expertise.
- Promote adequate follow-up.

Additionally, the Congress strongly believes that in an environment where citizens are required to do more with and for less, and in the spirit of the UNDP core principle of inclusivity, participation and transparency, it is incumbent on the government in collaboration with the social partnership and other stakeholders to ensure that fair mechanisms are established to truly facilitate sensible and sustainable broad-based community and citizen involvement in a well-focused participatory democracy. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of the role, function and independence of a modern civil service as well as the creation of a Salary Review Commission to review salary and conditions of service of all public officials and employees.

Another feature recommended for inclusion in the new constitution of the Republic of Barbados is a “Principle of National Policy” which embodies public trust and good governance, and which incorporates representation of small businesses and civic based organizations within the Social Partnership.

CTUSAB's Constitutional Review Working Group welcomes the discourse that is scheduled to take place on this critical matter of national importance. The Congress looks forward to being accorded a prominent place at the table and to making its submissions at the Townhall Meetings/Public debates whenever they are scheduled.

In conclusion, as we, on this beautiful day, pay tribute to our workers and celebrate their undertakings, achievements and contributions to the development of our society and our great nation, let us not forget that solidarity makes us strong and of course more productive.

Have a wonderful and successful May Day Celebration.

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