AFRICAN CARIBBEAN SUSTAINABILITY & INVESTMENT SUMMIT LONDON 2025

Z Z DAY ONE OVERVIEW

CONFERENCE THEME

Empowering Futures:
Uniting Africa and the
Caribbean through
Sustainable Innovation
and Inclusive Growth

Thu, Fri 08:30-17:30 November 21 - 22, 2025

Queens Gate House 65-67 Queens Gate, SW7 5JS London, United Kingdom



Executive Summary

Day 1 of ACSIS®2025, held in London on 21st November 2025, opened with a powerful call to accelerate collaboration between Africa, the Caribbean and the global diaspora. Chairman David F. Roberts set the tone, framing ACSIS as a strategic platform dedicated to connecting and empowering communities through innovation, investment and cultural development. Announcing that ACSIS will "go truly global" in 2026 with a debut to Ghana, he underscored this year's theme: 'Empowering Futures: Uniting Africa and the Caribbean through Sustainable Innovation and Inclusive Growth' – anchored in five priority areas: financial technologies; development and resilience; health and life sciences; creative and cultural industries; and reparations.

Across the day, speakers emphasised resilience in the face of global volatility. Segun Ajayi-Kadir highlighted how crises can strengthen Africa's industrial backbone, urging long-term investment and adaptive economic structures. Chris Desai championed the £8 trillion potential of the Blue Economy while warning against extractive development and environmental degradation, calling for a transition "from victims of pollution to creators of solutions."

Panels and keynote sessions reinforced the need for governance reform, inclusive entrepreneurship and climate-adaptive development. The first resilience panel stressed gender equity, women-led enterprise and policymaking that reflects local realities. Eric Phillips reframed reparations as both moral imperative and economic opportunity, urging nations to move beyond debate toward implementation.

In health and life sciences, speakers called for equitable healthcare systems built "from the individual outwards," addressing rural gaps, gender barriers and fragmented data. Dr Justina Mutale highlighted women as central drivers of societal transformation, while Dr Nicole Lawrence presented trauma-informed nutrition as a pathway to community healing.

Economic transformation remained a central theme. Dr Dianna DaSilva-Glasgow urged structural change and value addition to escape commodity-driven volatility. Judy Foster advocated for ecocide law as a mechanism to protect biodiversity and secure sustainable investment. Dr Lavern McFarlane outlined the role of emphasised economic diversification and the role of innovation in preparing small island economies for climate risk and external shocks, while tourism expert Ola Wright positioned heritage tourism as a tool for cultural unity and empowerment.

Investment and innovation discussions underscored the potential for new financial architectures. David Mullings challenged myths around Caribbean markets, emphasising narrative power in attracting capital. Naomi Sesay showcased self-sustaining smart city models grounded in indigenous knowledge. Dr Damie Sinanan pushed for actionable technology partnerships between Africa and the Caribbean, while Darwin Telemaque revealed how ownership of logistics and shipping infrastructure shapes economic sovereignty and industry growth.

Closing the day, Tsonam Akpeloo presented a forward-looking vision for an Africa-Caribbean tech corridor, calling for coordinated investment, shared digital standards and cross-regional talent mobility to drive global competitiveness.

Overall, Day 1 affirmed that sustainable progress relies on intentional partnerships, courageous governance, and investments that centre people, culture and innovation. Africa and the Caribbean can shape a shared, resilient and prosperous future – if they act together.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to our Diamond Sponsor, Afreximbank and our sponsorship partner, the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), for their invaluable support, which made these outcomes possible & to our speakers, moderators, vendors & audience.

In recognition of the ACSIS Team

No event of this scale and impact happens without the dedication, vision, and tireless efforts of an extraordinary team. The African Caribbean Sustainability & Investment Summit 2025 stands as a testament not only to the ideas shared here, but also to the people behind the scenes who brought this vision to life.

From the outset, the planning committee worked with meticulous care, ensuring that every detail—from speaker curation and panel design to logistics, sponsorships, and communications—aligned with the Summit's mission of fostering sustainable growth, investment, and inclusive collaboration across Africa, the Caribbean, and the diaspora. Their expertise, creativity, and unwavering commitment have made it possible for this summit to convene world-class leaders, innovators, and changemakers under one platform.

We extend our deepest gratitude to every member of the planning committee, the creative team, technical support, communications and marketing professionals, and all of our volunteers. Your collaborative spirit, resilience, and dedication ensured a seamless experience for participants and elevated ACSIS to an exceptional level of excellence. It is their work behind the scenes that has created the environment for ideas to flourish, partnerships to form, and action to take shape. On behalf of the entire ACSIS community, we celebrate and honour your contribution. This Summit would not have been possible without the dedication from our team in person on the event days, and across the globe.



Image: The ACSIS®2025 Event Day Team

Development, Resilience, Health, and Finance for Impact in the Global South

David F. Roberts (*Chairman & Founder, ACSIS*) - Chairman's Opening Remarks

Today marked the opening of ACSIS®2025, with Chairman David Roberts laying out a compelling vision for connecting Africa and the Caribbean through innovation, investment, and cultural development. He emphasised the mission "to connect and empower African and Caribbean communities through innovation, investment, and economic and cultural development." Over the next two days, Roberts explained, participants from Africa, the Caribbean, and the global diaspora will convene to strengthen partnerships between business, government and international organisations. He announced a milestone: that in 2026, ACSIS will "go truly global" and return to Ghana, signalling the initiative's ambition beyond Europe. Reflecting on this era of collaboration, he said "we move mountains together". The summit's theme this year is 'Empowering Futures: Uniting Africa and the Caribbean through Sustainable Innovation and Inclusive Growth', with five key topics identified: Financial Technologies; Development and Resilience; Health and Life Sciences; Creative and Cultural Industries; and Reparations and Reparative Justice.

Roberts specified that today's focus is "Development, Resilience, Health and Finance for Impact in the Global South". Through his remarks, he positioned ACSIS as more than a conference – it is a strategic platform that aims to shape pathways for sustainable development through investment and trade and generate actionable ideas for a brighter future across the two regions.



Image: David F. Roberts (Chair) and Derrick Cobbinah (Deputy-Chair) opening ceremony

Segun Ajayi-Kadir, mni (*Director General, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria*) – Building Resilient Economies: Resilience in the Face of Global Crises

Policy advocate Segun Ajayi-Kadir (mni) addressed the critical challenge of building resilient economies in Africa under the pressure of global crises. He underscored the practical logistics of how crises can become opportunities to bolster the continent's "industrial backbone." His message focused on how African economies can leverage adversity, turning shocks into structural strength. In his address he urged stakeholders to "turn crisis into opportunity," framing resilience not just as recovery but transformation.

Mr Ajayi-Kadir drew attention to the systemic challenges posed by global disruptions – such as supply chain interruptions, climate shocks, and geopolitical tension and made the case for localised industrial capability, robust infrastructure and adaptive economic models. His remarks served both as diagnosis and call to action: resilient economies are not built on short-term fixes but on long-term investment in foundational capacity that can withstand, and even benefit from, global volatility.



Image: Segun Ajayi-Kadir, mni, delivering an address on Resilience in the Face of Global Crises

Chris Desai (*CEO, UOCEAN2050, Vayyu Foundation*) - Harnessing the Blue Economy for Sustainable Growth

Entrepreneur and philanthropist Chris Desai drew attention to the vast, yet under-utilised, potential of the Blue Economy in Africa and the Caribbean. He asserted that if a project fails to offer solutions to environmental degradation, "it belongs in the last decade". Desai underscored that Africa's Blue Economy is worth over £8 trillion yet too frequently treated as extractive rather than regenerative.

Desai lamented that pollution generated in the Global North is too often offloaded onto African nations, and stressed that many governments operate under the assumption that any GDP-increasing project must go ahead without factoring in social and environmental cost. Against that backdrop, he showcased his own ventures; UOCEAN 2050 and UEARTH 2050, as models of education, mangrove replanting, and regenerative economy aimed at reversing "blue-washed extractivism". He warned that "the coastline around Africa is being pillaged and polluted" and characterised pollution as a "climate and health timebomb".

At the heart of his message was a shift: from "victims of pollution to creators of solutions". He reminded attendees that "the ocean is a global asset" and must be treated as such. His address closed with a strong admonition that environmental and social dimensions are inseparable from growth.



Image: Chris Desai on taking accountability and action.

Panel 1 (Moderator: Dr Ngozi Oyewole; Panellists: George Bamfo, Rushab Shah, Darwin Telemaque) - From Risk to Renewal: Adaptive Strategies for Development and Resilience in Africa and the Caribbean

In the first development and resilience panel of the day, moderated by Dr Ngozi Oyewole with panelists George Bamfo, Rushab Shah and Darwin Telemaque, the discussion turned to the role of women-owned enterprises and adaptive governance in Africa and the Caribbean.

The session opened with the recognition "Our countries are vulnerable... because of the impacts of climate", setting the tone for a wide-ranging examination of how climate vulnerability intersects with economic opportunity. The panellists stressed the significance of providing women entrepreneurs a platform to share ideas, and noted the need for bold policy making; asserting "We need proper governance that meets us where we are".

They further argued that policymakers should not be afraid to identify what does not work for African and Caribbean nations. The conversation included specific obstacles: limited access to finance, systemic neglect of women-led business models, and governance structures that fail to adapt to local realities. Ultimately, the panel charted a route from risk to renewal, one in which climate vulnerability is matched with adaptive investment, inclusive entrepreneurship and governance reform.



Image: Panellists (from left to right) Darwin Telemaque, Rushab Shah, Dr. Ngozi Oyewole, and George Bamfo.

Eric Phillips (*Director of I-Labs Guyana and Norway, Vice-Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission*) – "The question is not can reparations be repaid, but when"

Eric Phillips, Director of I-Labs Guyana and Norway and Vice-Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, delivered a compelling address on reparations for justice and development. He challenged the perception of reparations as charity, making clear that such claims stand as recognition of wealth stolen and now owed, "Not to beg for aid, but to demand justice".

He reminded the audience that reparations are "not unprecedented" and urged the framing of this movement as both moral imperative and economic opportunity: "The question is not can reparations be repaid, but when". Phillips shared how the CARICOM Reparations Commission supports, through a proposed sovereign wealth fund and tenpoint legal framework, annual contributions from countries like Britain and the Netherlands.

Phillips emphasised that reparative justice shifts from legal debate into cultural momentum, grounded in the idea that it is "morally right and economically beneficial". He also urged individuals and institutions to "use their platform", underscoring the role of advocacy in shaping public understanding and policy. His session made clear that reparations are not simply retrospective but part of the architecture of inclusive development.



Image: Eric Phillips on reparative justice.

Justin Placide (*Head of Net Zero Governance, Ministerial Briefing & Fiscal Events, UK Government: DESNZ*) – From Vulnerability to Resilience: Net Zero as a Growth Strategy

Justin Placide, Head of Net Zero Ministerial Briefing & Fiscal Events at the UK's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, addressed climate change not as a distant possibility but as "a daily reality". He urged African and Caribbean nations to view net-zero strategies as growth opportunities for resilient communities, rather than as constraints on development. He asserted that "development cannot be measured by GDP alone", signalling the need to broaden the metrics of progress to include social, environmental and resilience outcomes.

Placide's remarks highlighted that while net-zero presents vast developmental potential, plans must be grounded in local realities: communities need practical tools, inclusive governance and scalable interventions. Placide's presentation challenged conventional narratives and untangled the misconception that net-zero is only for high-income countries; he demonstrated how it can be a cornerstone of inclusive growth for the Global South.



Image: Justin Placide's address on Net Zero as a growth strategy.

Panel 2 (Moderator: David F. Roberts; Panellists: Dr Steve Maingot and Dr Nicole Lawrence) – Building Equitable Healthcare Systems Across Africa & the Caribbean

Moderated by David F. Roberts with panellists Dr Steve Maingot and Dr Nicole Lawrence, this health and life sciences panel zeroed in on equity, systemic barriers and rural inclusion in healthcare across Africa and the Caribbean. The conversation opened with the observation "Women are at greater risk... sometimes access is determined by their partner", and pointed to a dearth of research - "The literature on health in the Caribbean is very small".

The panellists emphasised prevention: chronic lack of care for preventable conditions leads to long-term systemic burdens. They advocated for shaping healthcare from the ground up: "Healthcare should always be 'from the individual outwards". Emphasising structural reform, they discussed challenges such as low infrastructure in rural areas, gender-based access inequities, and the fragmentation of health systems.

Strategies offered included strengthening data collection, engaging communities in service design, and deploying resources in underserved areas. The session delivered a clear message: inclusive health systems require more than funding, requiring redesigning how care is delivered, accessed and scaled in line with the social realities of Africa and the Caribbean.



Image: Panellists (from left to right) Steve Maingot, Dr. Nicole Lawrence, David F. Roberts.

Dr. Justina Mutale (*Founder, The Justina Mutale Foundation*) - From Caregivers to Changemakers: Women's Role in Shaping the Future

Dr Justina Mutale, global advocate for gender equality and founder of the Justina Mutale Foundation, reflected on the growing role of women in policy, research and innovation, arguing that "The future is women-led".

Dr. Mutale emphasised that involving women is not enough; they must thrive. Dr Mutale declared, "When women innovate, society transforms", and maintained that women's leadership is not exceptional but essential. Her remarks highlighted how women protect lives and culture, and how women entrepreneurs are working on community-connected solutions: "Women entrepreneurs are creating solutions that are deeply connected to their communities".

She called for systemic change: replacing tokenistic inclusion with genuine empowerment. Mutale's session recognised that women occupy key positions in the intersection of innovation, cultural preservation and sustainable development, and that their leadership merits investment, recognition and structural support.



Image: Dr. Justina Mutale on Women's Role in Shaping the Future.

Dr. Dianna DaSilva-Glasgow (*Dean of Social Sciences, University of Guyana*) - Sustainable Development in Developing Markets

Dr Dianna DaSilva-Glasgow, senior economics lecturer and Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Guyana, examined the structural dynamics of sustainable development in the African and Caribbean context.

She warned that the continued exportation of primary products "will continue to expose us to instability", stressing that while Africa and the Caribbean are rich in resources, their value is often diminished by a lack of transformation. She stated plainly that "Sustainable development does not occur by chance".

Dr. DaSilva-Glawsgow's remarks centred on the need to move beyond commodity-backed growth to economies built on value addition, resilience and equitable participation. She argued for systemic transformation: trading raw materials locks economies into volatility, whereas industrial diversification and regional integration create stronger, fairer societies. Her analysis highlighted that sustainable growth demands planning, investment, and structures that shift power and profit into local hands.



Image: Dr. Diana DaSilva-Glasgow on Sustainable Development in Developing Markets.

Judy Foster (*COO, Stop Ecocide International*) - The Case for Ecocide Law: Strengthening Africa's Environmental and Economic Resilience

Judy Foster, COO of Stop Ecocide International, delivered a powerful call to recognise ecocide: the mass destruction of nature, as an international crime and driver of both environmental and economic fragility.

She declared that ecocide law offers an "essential framework to protect life". Foster argued that the protection of biodiversity in Africa must be underpinned by accountability: holding those who destroy nature liable and creating strong deterrents. Such frameworks, she contended, will reduce risk and promote safe, sustainable investment that benefits people as well as the planet.

Her presentation underscored the urgent nexus of environmental stewardship and economic resilience: safeguarding the ecosystem is foundational to development, not optional. Foster's address made clear that legal frameworks matter as they shape the investment landscape, influence market behaviour and define the sustainability of future growth.



Image: Judy Foster on recognising Ecocide.

Dr. Lavern McFarlane (*Chief Economist, CARICOM Development Fund*) – Regional Economic Resilience: The Role of Financial Innovation & Integration in Caribbean Development

Dr Lavern McFarlane, Chief Economist at the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), explored how financial technologies and regional integration can bolster resilience and inclusion in Caribbean economies. Her discussion emphasised economic diversification and the role of innovation in preparing small island economies for climate risk and external shocks. She observed that economies need to be strong, fair, and sustainable, an echo of the summit's overarching theme.

Dr McFarlane emphasised collaboration across institutions and organisations as a linchpin in building resilient growth. By highlighting how fintech solutions can extend access and integration can scale impact, she offered a clear pathway for the Caribbean to step beyond traditional dependency structures and chart a modern trajectory for resilience.

The CDF joined ACSIS®2025 as a Programme Partner Sponsor, underlining a deeply aligned vision with the Summit's mission to "connect, empower, and elevate African and Caribbean communities" through sustainable development.



Image; Dr. Lavern McFarlane on the CDFs message at ACSIS for Caribbean Development.

Ola Wright (*CEO, WATO*) - Heritage Tourism: Bridging Cultures for Sustainable Growth

Tourism consultant Ola Wright addressed how shared African and Caribbean heritage can be leveraged to build inclusive, culturally rooted tourism models. She began by stating, "One people - and what better way to connect us than through tourism?"

Wright illustrated success stories across Africa and the Caribbean, while also acknowledging persistent challenges such as limited connectivity between the two regions. She posited that heritage is a key foundation for forward movement: "Heritage is how we move forward". She further noted: "Africa and the Caribbean share a story" and urged attendees to "Let us honour our ancestors".

Her presentation positioned heritage tourism not just as an economic sector, but as a vehicle for cultural affirmation, community empowerment and cross-regional integration. Wright's session concluded by urging a recalibration of tourism models; one grounded in partnership, reciprocity and preservation.



Image: Ola Wright, championing Tourism as a tool for development.

Dr Nicole Lawrence (*CEO, Healthy Haven Nutrition LLC*) - Healing the Divide: Trauma-Informed Nutrition

Dr Nicole Lawrence, registered dietitian-nutritionist and public health leader with nearly 30 years' experience, explored the intersection of trauma, food, health and culture. She said: "When we bring peace and understanding to our plate, we are not just eating a meal, we are disrupting a cycle of trauma".

Dr Lawrence highlighted how historical, economic and violence-related trauma can lead to toxic stress and severe health complications, asserting that "food is memory" and is deeply tied to mental and physical wellbeing as well as cultural legacy. Her words resonated with the room following lunch – she asked, "Think about how you feel when you smell that good food", evoking a sense of joy in the audience, a first-hand example showing food as an important tool of memory and emotion.

Her presentation underscored the importance of grounded, culturally sensitive nutritional interventions and the role of food in healing not just bodies, but communities. With this lens, Lawrence advanced a holistic view of health that includes heritage, trauma and social context as central to nutrition and wellness.



Image: Dr. Nicole Lawrence on Trauma-Informed Nutrition.

David Mullings (*CEO*, *Blue Mahoe Capital*), Fireside Chat with Siobhán O'Garro (*Moderator*) - Impact Investing and Financing Resilient Futures: Navigating Challenges and Connecting Investors

In a fireside chat moderated by Siobhán O'Garro with David Mullings (Chairman & CEO of Blue Mahoe Holdings), the pair explored the opportunities and challenges of investing in resilient futures across Africa and the Caribbean. Mullings affirmed that "small islands do not equal small returns", confronting commonly held assumptions about the Caribbean investment landscape.

Mullings emphasised the need to narrate and own our stories: "We need to tell our own stories". The discussion touched on how retail investors can access opportunities and why narratives matter in unlocking capital flows to the regions.

Together, they mapped the investment ecosystem, trading myths for business models, raising the voice of local innovators and aligning capital with resilience-oriented infrastructure. Their conversation reflected the summit's emphasis on connecting investors to real, region-specific opportunities and building finance platforms that understand both risk and promise.



Image: Panellists Siobhán O'Garro (left) and David Mullings (right)

Naomi Sesay (*CEO & Director, Matamp City*) - Smart Cities and Their Role in Sustainable Urban Development

Naomi Sesay presented on the transformative role of smart, sustainable cities as engines of inclusive growth. She stated "It is not governments and policies that change ourselves, it's ourselves that change ourselves", calling attention to the role of individual agency in city transformation. Sesay used the example of her own development: "Matamp City" – a prototype self-sustainable, energy-sovereign urban model founded on circular systems and indigenous knowledge.

Her presentation tied the technological and the cultural: urban development that is sustainable must embed local knowledge, resource sovereignty and system design. The session offered a forward-looking vision of urban resilience in Africa and the Caribbean, urging stakeholders to think beyond incremental change and instead build cities that are ecosystem-aware, citizen-driven and climate-adaptive.



Image: Naomi Sesay on Matamp City

Dr Damie Sinanan (*Executive Director, Caribbean Export Development Agency*) - Tech-Driven Transformation: Bridging Africa and the Caribbean Through Innovation and Investment

Dr Damie Sinanan, Executive Director, Caribbean Export Development Agency, advocated for a leap in cross-regional collaboration between Africa and the Caribbean through technology, investment and trade. He declared: "Let's stop all talk and no action", emphasising the urgency of moving from dialogue to delivery.

Dr Sinanan highlighted the low levels of trade between Africa and the Caribbean and stressed the need to share innovation ideas, investment frameworks and ecosystems between the regions. His remarks framed technology not just as a sector but as a connective tissue for growth and integration.

By focusing on actionable pathways, he challenged the status quo and invited participants to engage in tangible cross-regional initiatives. In his view, transformation will not come from isolated projects but via coordinated investment, shared learning and dynamic partnerships across continents.



Image: Dr. Damie Sinanan at ACSIS 2025.

Darwin Telemaque (*CEO*, *Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority*) – Leveraging Diaspora Networks to Scale African Creative Enterprises

Logistics expert and CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority, Darwin Telemaque shared an incisive examination of ports, shipping and the role of diaspora networks in scaling African creative enterprises. He emphasised: "Ports and shipping are the two most powerful things" and questioned: "The land is ours, so why are we giving it away?".

Telemaque argues that Africa does not own its key terminals or major shipping lines, and the result is that profits and decision-making escape the regions. "We are being controlled in a space that we own", he declared, painting a vivid picture of economic structure and dependence.

Telemaque's remarks connect infrastructure ownership with creative sector scaling: diaspora networks are essential not only for talent flows but for logistics, trade and enterprise. His session underscored that to unlock ownership and finance back to the local communities and away from a siphon across the world, attention must be paid to the physical and governance architectures that underpin it.



Image: Darwin Telemague exclaiming, "The land is ours, so why are we giving it away?"

Tsonam Akpeloo (Chairman, *Association of Ghana Industries*) – From Innovation to Investment: Building the Africa-Caribbean Tech Corridor

Technology entrepreneur and industrialist Tsonam Akpeloo, CEO of SUKU Technologies and Chairman, Association of Ghana Industries, ended day 1 at ACSIS by delivering a forward-looking address on the growing importance of African-Caribbean collaboration in the technology sector.

Akpeloo outlined how both regions stand at a pivotal moment: Africa is home to some of the fastest-growing tech ecosystems in the world, while the Caribbean offers expanding opportunities in fintech, digital services and climate-resilient innovation. Yet despite these strengths, collaboration remains limited. He argued that bridging this gap requires investment flows, cross-regional incubation programmes, and greater mobility of knowledge workers.

For Akpeloo, the corridor is not simply a metaphor but a practical framework to accelerate trade, unify digital standards and support scalable enterprise. He underscored that sustainable development will depend on more than resource extraction or traditional markets. Instead, value creation must emerge from innovation, digital literacy and technology-enabled industries capable of competing globally. By encouraging venture capital participation, diaspora investment and digital infrastructure integration, Akpeloo sees an opportunity to redefine economic futures across both regions. His message was clear: the Africa-Caribbean partnership can drive technological leadership if it is intentional, collaborative and grounded in shared development goals.



Image: Tsonam Akpeloo on Building the Africa-Caribbean Tech Corridor.

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FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contributions of the ACSIS Team & Volunteers cannot be underscored in the delivery of the ACSIS®2025 London Summit.



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