

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY, 3-6 JULY 2005, GROS ISLET, SAINT LUCIA

The Twenty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community was held in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, from 3 to 6 July 2005. Dr. the Honourable Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia and Chairman of CARICOM, presided over the Meeting of the Conference.

Other Heads of Government of Member States in attendance were: The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Baldwin Spencer; the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Hon. Keith Mitchell; the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo; the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. P.J. Patterson; the Chief Minister of Montserrat, Dr. the Hon. John Osborne; the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis; Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas; the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves; the President of Suriname, His Excellency Drs. Runaldo R. Venetiaan and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning.

Hon. Fred Mitchell, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Public Service represented the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, and Hon. John Briceno, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment represented the Prime Minister of Belize.

Heads of Associate Members in attendance were: Premier of Bermuda, Hon. W. Alexander Scott, JP; Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands, Dr. the Hon. D. Orlando Smith; and Leader of Government Business, Cayman Islands, Hon. Kurt Tibbetts.

The Turks and Caicos Islands were represented by Honourable Jeffrey C. Hall, Minister of Housing, Immigration and Labour.

Opening Ceremony

In the opening ceremony held on Sunday, 3 July, the tone for the Twenty-Sixth Meeting was set with statements by: Secretary-General of CARICOM, H.E. Mr. Edwin Carrington; President of Suriname and Outgoing Chairman of the Conference, H.E. Drs. Runaldo R. Venetiaan; recently elected Head of Government, Prime Minister of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; Incoming Chairman of the Conference, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning; and the Chairman of the Conference, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr. the Hon. Kenny D. Anthony.

Presentation of Awards

The Hon. Madam Justice Desiree Bernard, O.R., C.C.H., J.C.C.J was the recipient of the **Eighth Triennial Award for Women**. Justice Bernard received the award in recognition of her contribution in the field of women and development, with particular reference to the empowerment of women and social justice.

Presentations were made at the Opening Ceremony to the winners of the **Inaugural CARICOM 10K Race** which was held on Sunday, 3 July 2005 in Saint Lucia. Eight Member States participated in the race. Samia Akbar and Pominus Balantyne, both of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, were the senior female and male winners respectively; while Shonell Griffin and Hiley Fulgence, both of Saint Lucia, were the junior female and male winners respectively. The 10K race will be an annual event which will be held in the host country of the Regular Session of the Conference.

Exchange of Views

Heads of Government engaged in an exchange of views with a number of special guests: Dr. Rafael Alburqueque, Vice-President of the Dominican Republic, who delivered a message on behalf of the President of the Dominican Republic; His Excellency Enrique Iglesias, outgoing President of the Inter-American

Development Bank, and Envoy of the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Winston Cox, Deputy Secretary-General.

Meeting between Heads of Government and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition

Heads of Government welcomed the opportunity to exchange views with the Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition on the eve of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Conference on issues related to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). Heads of Government expressed satisfaction with the agreement to establish a Committee of Heads of Government and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition to discuss ways of involving Parliamentary Opposition more closely in Community affairs.

This Committee will comprise:

- **For the Parliamentary Opposition:** Hon. Edison James, Dominica; Hon. Robert Corbin, Guyana; and Hon. Bruce Golding, Jamaica.
- **For the Heads of Government:** Dr. the Hon. Kenny D. Anthony, Saint Lucia, Lead Head of Government for Justice and Governance; the Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur, Barbados, Lead Head of Government for the CSME; and H.E. Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Guyana, Lead Head of Government for Agriculture.

CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)

Heads of Government reviewed the state of readiness of the Member States of the Community to begin full operation of the Single Market by December 2005 and in respect of their full integration into the CSME, including the preparation of their domestic economies and implementation of treaty obligations.

Heads of Government welcomed the fast-track steps taken by Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago to become Single Market compliant since

March 2005 and took note of the strenuous efforts being made by all the remaining Member States to achieve Single Market treaty-compliance and overall readiness. They reflected on the constraints which Member States faced and the challenges of accelerated integration among states of differing capabilities and competitive strengths and reaffirmed their commitment to the long-held Community principle of special and differential treatment for the disadvantaged among the Member States.

The Lead Prime Minister for CSME, the Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados will visit the OECS to confer with his colleague Heads of Government on the measures necessary to address their concerns, especially as they relate to the provisions for special and differential treatment under the Revised Treaty. The findings of the visit will be incorporated into a Report setting out recommendations to be incorporated into an affirmative action programme which is intended to ensure that there is greater equity in the distribution of the benefits of the CSME. The Lead Prime Minister will also visit Belize, Guyana and Suriname.

Heads of Government emphasised the importance of the **Development Fund** for removing the inequalities in the single economic space, and therefore the need for urgent implementation in line with that of the Single Market. They requested the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP) to meet in September to finalise the recommendations for operationalising the Fund.

Heads of Government also reiterated the value that the inclusion of stakeholders, including business, labour and universities would bring to the process of moving to the single economy, and welcomed the decision of the COFAP that it would meet with the private sector at the beginning of each year.

The Bahamas reported on the state of the public debate in that country regarding the signing of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Member States agreed that in the circumstances of the particular position of The Bahamas, the *status quo* of its present relationship and involvement in CARICOM institutions should be maintained.

Free Movement of Skilled Community Nationals

With respect to the free movement of skilled nationals, Heads of Government agreed that CARICOM nationals who are entering under the Free Movement Regime with a Skills Certificate issued by a Member State other than the receiving State should be allowed to work immediately while their qualifications are verified by the receiving State. The Conference also agreed that the review of proposals for the expansion of the eligible categories of skilled nationals would be completed in time for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference.

Issuance of the CARICOM Passport

Heads of Government noted that St. Vincent and the Grenadines now joins Suriname, the first Member State to issue national passports using the common CARICOM format. Several other Member States are expected to introduce the new passport format in 2005 and 2006. December 2007 has been identified as the time frame for completing the introduction of the new passport format by all Member States.

Agriculture

Heads of Government urged the speedy implementation of the measures to address the constraints faced by the agricultural sector. This is all the more important at a time when the Region's major traditional agriculture commodities are facing increasing external threats to their survival.

The Lead Head of Government for Agriculture, President Jagdeo of Guyana, has been mandated to urgently convene a meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and the Private Sector to focus on the implementation of the interventions required to address these constraints.

As the Community moves towards the Single Economy, improving the competitiveness of agriculture has become a priority.

Heads of Government agreed that the Prime Minister of Barbados, Lead Head of Government for the CSME, in his mission to Member States would also explore the possibilities for securing the regional market for key regional agricultural products. The results of this review would contribute to the development of the regime for special and differential treatment for disadvantaged countries, regions and sectors. Heads of Government urged Member States to provide support for the implementation of the Plan of Action from the Jagdeo Initiative.

Heads of Government considered the proposals for **reform of the EU Sugar Regime** released by the European Commission on 22 June 2005 and their implications for CARICOM sugar producing countries and the integration movement as a whole. They issued a Statement which is **attached** to this Communiqué.

Report of the Commission on Health and Development

Heads of Government commended Sir George Alleyne, Chair of the Commission on Health and Development for a very informative Report that fully demonstrated the importance of health to the economic development of the Region. They recommended that the Report be widely distributed and discussed. They also urged the COHSOD to establish an agenda for the implementation of the recommendations and report on the progress made to their Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting.

The Meeting also commended Prime Minister Douglas for leading a successful PANCAP mission to Brazil in April, and noted that the CARICOM Secretariat is to follow up with the Ministry of Health in Brazil on the Letter of Agreement which includes support from the Government of Brazil for the HIV/AIDS care and treatment programme of the OECS involving the provision of Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs) for 500 People Living with AIDS (PLWA) over a five-year period.

Issues Related to Crime and Security

Heads of Government received a presentation on developments relating to security in the Region. It was recognised that the issue of security needed to be frontally addressed and effectively tackled in order to maintain sustainable development.

They endorsed the Management Framework for Crime and Security which makes provision for a Council of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement to superintend policy direction; a Security Policy Advisory Committee (SEPAC); and an Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS).

Heads of Government expressed their conviction that the new Management Framework would contribute significantly to successfully addressing issues of Crime and Security in the Region.

Issues Related to Cricket

Heads of Government considered the persistent crisis in West Indies Cricket, and in particular, the deteriorating relations between the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the West Indies Players Association (WIPA). They agreed to:

- invite the WICB to become an Associate Institution of the Community;
- provide material support for a programme for the development of West Indies Cricket, given its critical place in Caribbean integration and development;
- invite the Board and the Players' Association to establish immediately a "Good Offices Mechanism" comprising three eminent Caribbean persons to assist in the resolution of disputes between the Board and the Association;
- re-affirm that the authority of the WICB in the selection and discipline of players must remain sacrosanct .

Heads of Government were apprised of **security issues arising out of the contractual obligations of Member States in respect of the hosting of CWC 2007** and the legislative and other security measures which must be put in place at the regional level to ensure the successful and safe conduct of the tournament.

They agreed that the Management Framework for Crime and Security should also include a Co-ordinating Unit to harmonize the security procedures to be put in place throughout the Region and to function as the liaison between CWC 2007 and regional Governments, and in particular the Ministers responsible for National Security and Law enforcement, in matters pertaining to regional security arising out of the hosting of Cricket World Cup (CWC) 2007.

External Trade Negotiations

Heads of Government reviewed developments in the various external trade negotiations in which the Region is involved. They noted that the rapidly changing international environment was less accommodating of preferential arrangements, such as those that traditionally characterised the Region's trade relations. They reiterated the Region's commitment to and active participation in ongoing external trade negotiations, but observed that the current challenges including the tardy progress on special and differential treatment for small, vulnerable economies and the general push for reciprocity were beginning to raise uncertainty about the costs and the benefits involved. They reiterated their commitment to undertake the necessary internal adjustments to make their economies more competitive but indicated that the speed of current external developments was threatening to derail this process.

Heads of Government noted the intensification of multilateral trade negotiations in the WTO, but that progress in resolving the outstanding issues continued to be slow, with many of the concerns of the small, vulnerable economies such as those of the Caribbean Community still to be addressed. They expressed the

hope that the upcoming mini-Ministerial Meeting in China would result in accommodations that could facilitate a positive outcome at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005.

Heads of Government noted that agreement for the resumption of FTAA negotiations to which they remain committed, continues to be elusive and that a number of hemispheric countries were pursuing bilateral free trade agreements. They agreed that the Community would continue to explore options for structured trade arrangements with other countries or groupings within the hemisphere.

Heads of Government reaffirmed the Region's commitment, in close collaboration with the Dominican Republic, in concluding an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union. They emphasised that it was imperative for such an agreement to incorporate a development dimension which would complement the new WTO compatible trade arrangements of the EPA.

2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

Heads of Government received a presentation on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment conducted during the period 2001-2005. They noted that the Assessment was called for in 2000. It was conducted to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems.

They noted the disturbing finding of the Assessment that human actions are putting such a strain on the environment that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations could no longer be taken for granted. They agreed that Member States should study the findings and recommendations of the Report.

2005 Hurricane Season

Heads of Government expressed concern for those countries in the Region which were already under threat from tropical storms so early in the Hurricane Season, noting that during the course of their meeting, Tropical Storm Dennis was threatening the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica.

They urged all countries and territories in the region to ensure that the necessary hurricane precautionary measures and mitigation plans are in place and called on the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) to work with participating Members to this end. They reiterated their commitment to provide mutual support to assist, within their means, any Member State, Associate Member and neighbouring country that may be affected in what has been predicted to be a very active hurricane season.

Re-organisation of the Meetings of the Conference

Heads of Government agreed that there was need to revisit the structure of, and format for the meetings of the Conference to allow for maximum time for discussion among themselves on critical and strategic issues facing the Community. To this end, they requested the Secretary-General to undertake appropriate consultations with a view to preparing proposals for restructuring their meetings – both Inter-Sessional and Regular – for consideration at the Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting in 2006. They commended the Secretary-General for the measures put in place at this meeting aimed at initiating this process of restructuring the meetings of the Conference.

UN Reform

Heads of Government noted that Member States are favourably disposed towards an expansion of the United Nations Security Council. They however, firmly hold the view that Security Council reform should not diminish the importance of the other aspects of the reform process, such as the development

agenda, revitalisation and strengthening of the General Assembly and reform of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

They indicated that a significant number of Member States are inclined to support the G4 Framework Resolution contingent on:

- strong support for their development agenda as small, vulnerable states;
- inclusion of the proposals of the African Union in relation to expansion of the Security Council;
- acceptance of the principle of rotation of membership on the Security Council;

In this context, they requested CARICOM Permanent Representatives to the United Nations to work towards arriving at a common CARICOM position on the issue of UN Reform, monitoring developments closely and liaising with their Foreign Ministers.

Terrorism

Heads of Government endorsed the position adopted by the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) at its Eighth Meeting in The Bahamas on 1-2 June 2005 regarding the detention by US immigration officials of Mr. Luis Posada Carriles. This individual has been long associated with acts of violence against the Government of Cuba and is a primary suspect as one of the authors of the most horrific act of terrorism ever experienced by the countries of CARICOM, the 1976 bombing of a Cuban aircraft in international waters off Barbados.

They called for all the perpetrators of this act of terrorism to be brought to justice and so bring closure to this egregious incident which caused so much pain to the people of the Region.

OAS General Assembly

Heads of Government welcomed the election of Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin as Assistant Secretary General of the Organisation of American States at elections held during the XXXV Meeting of the OAS General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on 7 June 2005. They noted that the newly elected Secretary-General of the OAS, His Excellency Jose Miguel Insulza, had presided over his first meeting of the General Assembly in that capacity. Heads of Government stressed their conviction that under the guidance of the new team at the OAS, the work of that the organization will proceed in a manner which meets the expectations of the people of the hemisphere.

Haiti

Heads of Government noted with great concern the continuing deterioration of the situation in Haiti in all respects. Widespread abuse of due process and fundamental rights, spiraling crime, in particular kidnapping, lawlessness and acts of violence, along with a lack of improvement in the social and economic situation had made life even more unbearable, especially in the capital.

The slow progress in the preparations for elections as well as the increasingly unstable political and security environment were seen as obstacles to timely and well-run elections. A free, fair and inclusive process were regarded as imperative, without which the return to constitutional rule would lack legitimacy.

Heads of Government noted the discussions between the CARICOM Electoral support and the Provisional Elections Council, the United Nations and the OAS, and CARICOM's readiness to provide technical assistance support for the process under the umbrella of MINUSTAH.

Heads reiterated the importance they attach to improvement in the human rights, political, security and economic domains without which there could be no stability nor the possibility of socio-economic and institutional development which were so vitally required.

As concerns the Community's engagement in favour of the people of Haiti, Heads of Government decided that CARICOM would be ready to participate in the international observation of elections when the conditions on the grounds were conducive.

Rio Group

Heads of Government confirmed that Guyana would continue to represent the Region in the Rio Group for another two years. They welcomed the fact that Guyana, representing CARICOM, would be assuming the Chairmanship of the Rio Group as of January 2006. They pledged their support to Guyana as it carries out this task. Heads of Government expressed the conviction that participation by the Region in the Rio Group would continue to strengthen CARICOM's relations with the countries of Latin America. In this regard, they also supported the application of Belize for membership on an individual basis of the Rio Group.

Belize-Guatemala Relations

Heads of Government were briefed on the ongoing process in respect of the Belize-Guatemala Territorial Differendum.

Heads of Government reaffirmed the unequivocal support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belize and urged the two countries to intensify the process of negotiations under the auspices of the OAS in order to bring the territorial claim to an early end through a peaceful, just and definitive resolution of the Territorial Differendum between the two countries. They expressed appreciation for the work of the office of the Secretariat of the OAS in the adjacency zone to maintain peace and improve relations between the peoples of the two countries, especially in the border area, and appealed to countries to support the special OAS Fund for that purpose.

Guyana-Venezuela Relations

Heads of Government noted with satisfaction that relations between Guyana and Venezuela continued to be cordial.

They underscored the importance of the ongoing dialogue at the level of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs in promoting this cordiality, and noted that such dialogue had resulted in a renewal of commitment to a peaceful settlement of the controversy through the mechanism of the United Nations Good Offices Process (GOP) and to functional cooperation under the aegis of the Guyana-Venezuela High-Level Bilateral Commission.

Heads of Government reiterated their full support for the preservation of Guyana's sovereignty and its right to the unrestricted development of all its territory for the benefit of its people.

The Caribbean Diaspora

Heads of Government reiterated the need to develop a strategy to enhance relations between the Community and its diaspora in the metropolitan centres. To this end, they requested the Chair of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) to meet with representatives of the Caribbean Diaspora at least once a year.

Relations with the African Union

Heads of Government welcomed the initiatives being taken to strengthen the relationship between the African Union and the Community. They expressed appreciation for the decision of the AU to include the Diaspora as its Sixth Region. They noted with satisfaction, the report of the Conference co-hosted by the Governments of South Africa and Jamaica with the theme "Towards Unity and United Action by Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a better world."

Heads asserted that they would use the opportunities presented in international fora to engage their African Union counterparts. On behalf of the Community, the Secretary-General conveyed a message to the African Union on the occasion of the Fifth Ordinary Session of its Assembly.

CARICOM-Cuba Summit

Heads of Government recalled their undertaking to meet with the President of Cuba on a triennial basis to discuss issues of mutual interest. They agreed to the convening of the Summit in Barbados on 8 December 2005, and proposed the theme "Caribbean Strategies for Human Security".

Appreciation

Heads of Government expressed gratitude to the Government and People of Saint Lucia for the warm hospitality extended and the excellent arrangements made during the Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Conference. They particularly appreciated the social and cultural activities and the arrangements for the First CARICOM 10K race which contributed in no small measure to the congenial atmosphere in which the Conference unfolded.

Heads of Government congratulated the Secretary-General and staff of the Secretariat for their hard work which contributed to the successful outcome of the meeting.

Date and Venue of the Next Inter-Sessional Meeting

Heads of Government were pleased to accept the offer from the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to host the Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference on 9-10 February 2006.

Gros Islet, Saint Lucia

6 July 2005