

COMMUNIQVES PRESS RELEASES

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWENTY- EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), 1-4 JULY 2007, NEEDHAM'S POINT, BARBADOS

• JULY 5, 2007 🔥 1,119 📄 26 MINUTES READ

The Twenty-Eighth Regular Meeting of the Conference of The Conference of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held in Needham's Point, Barbados, from 1-4 July 2007. The Right Honourable Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados, presided.

Other members of the Conference in attendance were: The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Baldwin Spencer; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt Hon. Keith Mitchell; the President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo; the President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency René Preval; the Chief Minister of Montserrat, Hon. Dr. Lowell Lewis; the Prime Minister of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, Hon. Dr. Denzil L. Douglas; Acting Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Hon. Stephenson King; 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 the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning.

Hon. T Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs represented the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Hon Lisa Shoman Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade represented Belize. His Excellency Peter Black, Ambassador to the Caribbean Community represented Jamaica.

Associate Members in attendance were: Hon. D. Neletha Butterfield Acting Premier and Minister of the Environment, Telecommunications and e-Commerce representing Bermuda; and Mrs Lorna Smith, Director of International Affairs representing the British Virgin Islands.

Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was held on Sunday, 1 July 2007 in the Courtyard of the Barbados Parliament Buildings. The tone for the deliberations of the Conference was set with statements by: Secretary-General of CARICOM, H.E. Edwin Carrington; Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves; Acting Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Hon. Stephenson King, on behalf of the Rt. Hon. Sir John G. M. Compton, OCC; and Prime Minister of Barbados and Chairman of the Conference, Rt. Hon. Owen Arthur.

The Secretary-General lauded the symbolism of the Opening Ceremony being held in the precincts of the Parliament Building of the third oldest Parliament in the Western Hemisphere and portrayed the occasion as a celebration of the Region's "justly deserved, globally acknowledged democratic tradition."

The Secretary-General praised Barbados' leadership in the integration process, in particular with regard to the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), the security and public health aspects of the Cricket World Cup 2007 and the concept of the Conference on the Caribbean recently held in Washington D.C., USA.

In setting out the theme for the Meeting of the Conference – ‘Functional Co-operation: A Community for All’ – the Secretary-General spoke of the region’s successful cooperation in fields such as health, education, disaster management and reminded that “these are issues which touch on the everyday lives of our people and therefore areas in which our Community must demonstrate that integration has meaning and relevance for every man, woman and child within its Member States and its Associate Members.”

In his remarks, Hon. Stephenson King, Acting Prime Minister of Saint Lucia said that while no disruptions, social or economic, could be attributed to the coming into being of the CARICOM Single Market, the Community had to be vigilant and carefully monitor the implementation process.

In that regard he stressed the importance of public information. “The Government of Saint Lucia is continuing to sensitise the populace about the workings of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), and the benefits that are likely to be derived from its implementation,” he said.

The Acting Prime Minister, in praising the success of the recent Conference on the Caribbean, urged that its structure be a model for other such interactions with the United Kingdom and Canada, for example.

The immediate past Chairman, Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, characterised his tenure as one in which the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had “made more than satisfactory progress in its consolidation and further advancement.”

The Prime Minister cited the staging of the Cricket World Cup 2007, the Conference on the Caribbean and the commercial alliance between LIAT and Caribbean Star as three of the successful outcomes during his chairmanship.

Focusing on air transportation issues, the Prime Minister stated that it was “an act of irresponsibility for any government to stand askance from regional solutions to the practical issues of intra-regional air travel.” In that context he stressed the need for support for international airports for Dominica and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

In his statement, the Chairman of CARICOM, the Rt. Hon. Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados, stated that he looked forward to the challenge of leading the Community despite the weighty responsibility at this critical juncture of Caribbean development.

The Chairman joined the other speakers in extending a welcome to the Special Guest of the Community at the 28th Meeting of the Conference, United States Congressman Charles Rangel,

Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the United States House of Representatives.

The Chairman, in honing in on the main theme of the Meeting, Functional Co-operation: A Community for All, contended that the Community was conceived to be somewhat more than a unified regional economy.

“It was also especially intended to establish programmes and mechanisms by which cooperation could be undertaken across all the social, cultural and environmental sectors which directly affect the quality of life of all of the people of our Community,” the Chairman stated.

The Chairman said that the progress made, despite the odds, in bringing the CSME into existence, “should give us the confidence to take the road least travelled – that of collaborative effort in developing our social systems, our common services and the institutions which directly affect the quality of life of our people.”

In attendance at the Opening Ceremony were the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States and the Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

Messages to the Meeting of the Conference

The Conference received a message from the Secretary General of the United Nations His Excellency Ban Ki Moon which emphasised the high degree of co-operation within the Caribbean Community as a “wonderful example for other regions and countries.”

The Secretary General also used the opportunity to encourage Heads of Government to attend the high level meeting on Climate Change scheduled to take place at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA, on 24 September, 2007.

FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION: A COMMUNITY FOR ALL

The Conference, after noting the evolution of the concept and application of functional cooperation in the Community, identified the priorities and targets for implementing functional cooperation in areas that contribute optimally to the regional integration process and the development and well-being of CARICOM citizens.

In emphasising the centrality of functional co-operation to Community development, the Conference also issued a declaration entitled : **A Community For All: Declaration on Functional Co-operation** which is attached to this communiqué.

Human Resource Development and Health

The Conference noted the landmark inauguration in 2007 of the award of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) in secondary schools in the Region and commended Trinidad and Tobago for implementing the award and St. Kitts and Nevis for its progress toward implementation in 2008. The Conference urged other Member States to initiate and complete the process of award of CVQs.

The Conference also commended the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) for the role they played in developing the system for CVQs.

The Conference expressed continuing support for the work of the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN) including the establishment of the C@ribnet, which would assist in providing the infrastructure necessary to amplify educational opportunities for our citizens.

The Conference noted the progress made toward the finalisation of the Caribbean Co-operation in Health Initiative III (CCH III) process and the governance of the regional health institutions and cited these as mechanisms for strengthening functional cooperation in health. The Conference acknowledged that these initiatives were intimately related to the recommended priorities and the way forward for implementing the main

recommendations of the Caribbean Commission on Health and Development.

The Conference agreed to its full participation in the Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases, to be held in Port- of- Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 14 September 2007.

The Conference recognised, with appreciation, the role of the Pan-American Health Organisation/World Health Organisation (PAHO/WHO), partnering with CARICOM in the area of health and development.

The Conference encouraged Member States with loan/grant programmes related to HIV/AIDS initiatives with the World Bank and other agencies to examine the reasons for the slow implementation and the policies that are required to accelerate expenditure.

University of the West Indies

The Conference took the opportunity to receive from the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies (UWI), an update on the UWI's progress with respect to its development plans, in particular the Strategic Plan which has been developed to guide the University's development over the period 2007-2012.

Following an excellent exchange of ideas on how access can be improved and on the kind of support required from the contributing governments to support its developmental plans, it was decided that ongoing, close dialogue be maintained between the leadership of the Region and the leadership of the UWI, with Heads of Government being invited to attend the statutory meetings of the UWI.

The University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) also received the attention of the Conference and a request was made for the capital requirements to facilitate the UHWI's reinstatement as one of the premier training institutions in the Region to be submitted for consideration by contributing governments.

Youth and Culture

The Conference noted the report on the activities relating to Culture, Youth and Development presented by the President of Suriname, His Excellency Drs. Runaldo Venetiaan.

The Conference commended the achievements recorded in relation to Culture and Youth during the period reported on, in particular the inauguration of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development in accordance with the terms of reference approved by Heads of Government.

The Conference agreed to support the implementation of the new model festival to be introduced at CARIFESTA X to be held in The Bahamas in 2008.

The Conference approved recommendations arising from regional international events commemorating the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, including calls for reparation as well as establishing a William Wilberforce Education Fund to support scholarships and finance student and teacher exchanges.

The Conference urged Member States to give positive support to the Caribbean Fund for Culture and the Arts and to fully support The Bahamas in the staging of CARIFESTA X.

THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)

The Conference approved the report **Towards a Single Development Vision and the Role of the Single Economy** (formerly entitled “**Towards a Single Economy and a Single Development Vision**”) and thanked Professor Norman Girvan and his team for their work in preparing the document.

The Conference agreed that the **Single Economy** should be fully operational by 2015 as proposed in the revised Report. In that regard, the Conference mandated the preparation of a Strategic

Development Plan based on the revised Vision Report to be completed by June 2008.

Since the enactment of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas into domestic law and the declaration of the Single Market Compliance gave Community nationals rights and legitimate expectations of benefits, the Conference urged Member States which had not fully implemented the provisions of the Revised Treaty to fulfill their obligations

The Conference remained engaged with **Montserrat** regarding its participation as a full partner in the CSME and agreed to seek to enable that participation as Montserrat completes the appropriate deliberations with the UK.

The Conference engaged stakeholders under the umbrella of the recently constituted **Caribbean Business Council**. It called on the Council to engage the Conference in a mature partnership in which the Council created the infrastructure and acquired the capabilities needed for research and provision of advice on the various components of the Single Economy including, policy, legal arrangements, institutions and programmatic interventions.

The Conference looked forward to the completion of all necessary requirements in order to meet the commissioning date

of 30 November 2007, for the Community's **Competition Commission**.

The Conference also noted, with appreciation, the contribution of the Donor Community, in particular the European Union (EU), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), in supporting implementation of the CSME.

The Conference approved the Draft Policy Guidelines for operating the **CARICOM Development Fund (CDF)** and also approved the Legal Framework and Rules of the Fund. Further work was mandated concerning the structuring of the proposed **Regional Development Agency** to include the Fund and its strategic functions.

The Conference also requested the Resource Mobilisation Task Force to address the issues related to the capitalisation of the CDF.

The Conference mandated the Secretariat to work with private sector organisations and support institutions to identify ways in which they could intensify the scope and thrust of their operations in keeping with the objectives of Chapter 7 of the Revised Treaty.

The Conference reiterated its commitment to the **Free Movement of Community nationals**.

The Conference requested a study of the **movement of skilled persons** in order to guide the future operations of the free movement regime and to ensure that CARICOM citizens are assured of a harmonised application of the regime.

The Conference agreed that CARICOM nationals should be allowed an automatic six month stay on arrival in another CARICOM Member State. Antigua and Barbuda entered a reservation in this regard.

AGRICULTURE

The Conference received the Report on the Agriculture Donor Conference held on 2 June 2007 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and commended the lead Head of Government for Agriculture, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo, President of Guyana, and his team of regional organisations including CDB, IICA, CARDI and the CARICOM Secretariat. The Conference expressed appreciation to the donors, particularly Italy, Spain, the European Union and FAO, who made an initial pledge for the implementation of the Region's agricultural development programme.

The Conference supported the follow-up Plan of Action and looked forward to the continued support from other interested donors.

The Conference, in reaffirming support for the hosting of a follow-up Investment Conference in November 2007 recognised the significant role of the Private Sector in agriculture development and mandated that they be involved from the planning stage.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Conference expressed grave concern over the threat posed by global climate change to the sustainable development and future existence of the countries of Region. They noted, with alarm, the recent findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which demonstrated that human activity is the main cause of global warming and called for urgent and ambitious action to avoid a global climate disaster. They further underscored that dangerous climate change was already occurring and, that for CARICOM and other Small Island and Low-lying Developing States (SIDS), adaptation against current and future impacts was a high priority.

The Conference welcomed the commitment made by the G-8 to work constructively within the UNFCCC towards a post-2012

regime to comprehensively address climate change. They called on all Parties to the Convention, particularly all major emitters of dangerous greenhouse gases, to agree formally to launch negotiations on a post-2012 climate regime at the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Bali, Indonesia on 4-13 December 2007. They highlighted that the priorities of the Region in a post-2012 regime were:

- the achievement of substantial and legally binding emission reductions in the shortest time frame possible;
- significant increases in the level of resources available to developing countries, particularly SIDS, to assist them in adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Conference pledged to work within the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) and with other likeminded states and groups of states, to achieve these ends. They also committed to strengthening the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) to enable it to effectively discharge its mandate and enhance the Region's negotiating capacity.

The Conference welcomed the initiatives of the President of the UN General Assembly and the Secretary General of the United Nations to build positive political momentum towards the Bali meeting by convening two high level events in New York on 31

July-1 August and 24 September, 2007. The Conference agreed to participate actively in both events.

CRIME AND SECURITY

The Conference agreed in principle on the implementation of several measures designed to strengthen security arrangements within CARICOM. These measures which will build on those arrangements established for CWC 2007, include the creation of a Virtual Single Domestic Space facilitated through a voluntary regime of a CARICOM Travel Card with facial and finger print biometrics. This Travel Card will allow CARICOM Nationals (with the exception of some of those on the CARICOM Watchlist) and Nationals of Third Countries legally resident within the participating Member States, expedited passage through airports in participating States without having to be subjected to passport examination. Further consultations will be held so that an Implementation Plan can be finalised for approval by the Bureau of the Conference of Heads of Government.

Other measures to be finalised by September 2007 include a CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Agreement and a CARICOM Arrest Warrant Treaty. The Maritime and Airspace Agreement for CARICOM Member States will allow Member States to make best use of available resources in order to provide surveillance of the maritime environment; while the Arrest Warrant will put in place a

legal mechanism to effect surrender of suspected persons and fugitives across borders. In the first instance, the focus will be on providing coverage for the maritime environment shared by Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia.

CRICKET

ICC/CWC 2007

The Conference expressed its satisfaction at the successful staging of the Cricket World Cup 2007 in the Caribbean and noted the Report on the event presented to the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Cricket by the Managing Director/CEO of ICC/CWC 2007, Mr. Christopher Dehring. In that regard, the Conference noted that the final independent audit of CWC 2007 by KPMG was scheduled for completion by 30 September 2007.

The Conference expressed appreciation to Mr. Dehring for his leadership prior to and during the hosting of CWC 2007.

The Conference commended the Deputy Prime Minister of Barbados, Honourable Mia Mottley for her outstanding leadership which helped to ensure a safe and secure environment for all during the tournament.

The Conference praised the level of cooperation among countries at the regional level and the private and public sectors at the national levels, particularly given the fact that there were no major safety and security issues at any stadium during CWC 2007.

The Conference lauded, in particular, the successful operation of the Single Domestic Space and the CARICOM Visa.

The Future of West Indies Cricket

The Conference received the presentation made by Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada and Lead Head of Government with responsibility for Cricket, and considered the recommendations emanating from the Fourteenth Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Cricket held on 30 June 2007 in Barbados.

The Conference noted the status report by the Chairman of the Governance Committee on West Indies Cricket, the Most Honourable Percival Patterson and also noted the Committee's commitment to submitting a full report as soon as possible.

The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Chairman and Members of the Governance Committee for its work in respect of the development of West Indies Cricket.

The Conference further noted the presentation of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) to the Prime Ministerial Sub-committee with respect to developments relating to Cricket in the Region.

In that regard, the Conference agreed that there should be the widest possible consultation before any decision was taken with regard to the establishment of Cricket academies in Member States. The Conference also proposed the development of a intra-regional market.

The Conference also agreed that professional leagues would benefit the game and cricketers and would best be supported by the private sector;

The Conference urged strongly that the Board should urgently engage in consultations with Sir Alan Stanford regarding the development of the sport in the Region.

TRANSPORTATION

The Conference considered a report from Transportation Ministers and endorsed a proposal on the way forward for elaboration a regional air and maritime transportation policy and other issues currently engaging the attention of the Community.

LIAT

The Conference stressed that intra-regional transportation was essential for the continued development of the Caribbean Community and for building a sense of Community among the people of the Region. In that context, the Conference agreed in principle that those countries that are being served by LIAT should provide material support for its restructuring.

The Conference also agreed that the three shareholder governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and St Vincent and the Grenadines through the Directors of LIAT should proceed with the plan for restructuring the airline. In that regard, the Conference endorsed the approach by the three shareholder governments to the Caribbean Development Bank for loan financing for the restructuring.

The Conference mandated a Special Meeting of the COTED to be convened urgently specifically to discuss LIAT. The Conference urged that participation in the meeting be at the highest level.

GOVERNANCE OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

The Conference reviewed the preliminary report of the Sub-Committee of the Technical Working Group on Governance (TWG) which was requested, among other things, to determine how the proposal by the Guyana Government for the establishment of a Council for Economic Cooperation might be

reconciled with the recommendations contained in the original TWG Report.

The Conference decided to establish a Council for Coordination and Implementation to replace the existing Community Council. They also affirmed their agreement to establish a CARICOM Commission as a mechanism for facilitating the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Community. The Conference established a small committee headed by the Chairman of Conference, the Prime Minister of Barbados, to refine the decision and advance implementation of the recommendations of the TWG.

BORDER ISSUES

Guyana/Venezuela Relations

The Conference expressed satisfaction with the efforts made by Guyana and Venezuela to maintain good relations

The Conference further noted the endeavours being made by the two countries within the ambit of the Geneva Agreement, to find a means of settlement of the controversy that arose from the Venezuelan contention that the 1899 Arbitral Award is null and void.

The Conference reiterated the full support of the Caribbean Community for the maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

Belize/Guatemala Relations

The Conference received the following report on the ongoing negotiation process between the Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala:

Further to the agreement between the Governments of Belize and Guatemala to move forward expeditiously with the relocation to land in Guatemala of illegal Guatemalan settlers now in Santa Rosa, Belize, the OAS had reported to both governments that land had been identified and accepted by the settlers. The OAS is now engaged in purchasing the land, after which the resettlement process will begin, for which additional funds will be needed from donor countries.

The OAS has prepared and delivered to Belize, Guatemala and Honduras a draft agreement covering the delimitation of their respective territorial seas and exclusive economic zones and for the sustainable development of part of the Gulf of Honduras. This draft agreement has been considered and reviewed by the Parties, and the OAS is drafting a revised version for consideration by a technical meeting.

Belize and Guatemala are awaiting from the OAS an “Issues Paper” that will provide a basis for the Parties to explore the option of submitting the territorial dispute to a judicial process.

The Conference reiterated the full support of the Caribbean Community for the maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize.

Relations with the United States

Conference On The Caribbean

The Conference recalled the recent Conference on the Caribbean held in Washington D.C., USA, and expressed its satisfaction at the deliberations which involved governments, the private sector, academicians and the Diaspora.

The Conference stressed the need for follow-up action to build on the positive nature of the discussions at all levels. In that regard, the Conference established a working group under the direction of the Bureau of COFCOR to set priorities for immediate follow-up action.

The Conference expressed its appreciation for the efforts of the Government of the United States, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organisation of American States and the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors in Washington

for their invaluable assistance and contribution towards the success of the event. The Conference also expressed its appreciation to Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, Dame Billie Miller for her lead role and advocacy in pursuing the vision of the Conference.

Exchange of Views With Congressman Charles Rangel, Chairman, Committee On Ways And Means, US House Of Representatives

The Conference welcomed its Special Guest, Congressman Charles Rangel of the United States House of Representatives, and expressed their appreciation for his long and continuing interest in Caribbean affairs.

The Conference recalled the recent meeting during the Conference on the Caribbean with the United States House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee of which Mr Rangel is the Chairman. Heads of Government agreed that that meeting as well as the exchange at this meeting marked the start of a new approach to the relationship with the United States through increased contacts with the Congress, its Committees and the Congressional Black Caucus.

The Conference also agreed to undertake a dedicated visit to New York City at a time to be determined to interact with and

cement ties between the Caribbean and African American communities. The Conference further agreed to work with the Congressional Black Caucus to ensure a shared legacy of progress for both communities.

External Trade Negotiations

The Conference examined developments in relation to external trade negotiations engaging the Region's attention. In respect of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union, which is scheduled for completion by the end of 2007, the Conference noted progress to date and the challenges that the Region's technicians and negotiators continue to face. It re-emphasized the need for the EPA to provide clear development benefits for Caribbean economies individually and for the Region as a whole, while allowing special flexibilities for the LDCs of the Region, and for it also to benefit and support economic operators in the Region. The Conference reaffirmed its position rejecting inclusion of provisions on good governance with regard to taxation issues in the EPA.

The Conference also called on CARIFORUM Sugar and Banana stakeholders to meet urgently in order to assess and determine their positions for the EPA negotiations in light of EU proposals and developments with unfavourable implications for these products from the Caribbean.

At the multilateral level, the Conference noted that prospects for the successful completion of WTO negotiations in the context of the Doha Development Agenda remain dim, since major players have been unable to narrow their differences and the expected negotiation breakthrough has not yet materialised. The Conference reaffirmed the commitment of the Region to remain fully engaged in the process.

The Conference also noted the outcome of initial exchanges between CARICOM and Central American senior officials meeting in Panama on 30 May 2007, and the agreement to launch bilateral negotiations shortly.

The Conference recognized the need to advance implementation and deepening of the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement by completing the negotiation agenda on Trade in Services and urged Member States to facilitate an early engagement with the Dominican Republic.

The Conference agreed that on the occasion of the visit to Barbados later this month by the Prime Minister of Canada the two sides will launch negotiations for a comprehensive free trade agreement and thereby further broaden and deepen the important Canada-CARICOM relationship.

Antigua and Barbuda/United States Trade in Services

The Conference took note with appreciation of the update provided by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda on latest developments on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Internet Gaming case against the United States.

The Conference expressed support for the action taken by Antigua and Barbuda under Article 22.2 of the WTO's DSU to preserve its case and commended it for filing a claim of interest under Article XXI of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), while noting the tremendous support it had received from other WTO members in this regard.

The Conference also took note of the interest this matter has generated among some members of the United States Congress and pledged to work with those members who have introduced bills in the US House of Representatives aimed at regulating and enforcing Internet Gaming. In this regard, the Conference expressed its appreciation and pledged its support for the efforts of the Chairman of the US House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services, who has introduced the Internet Gambling Regulation and Enforcement Act of 2007.

Appreciation

The Conference expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Barbados for the warm hospitality and generosity

extended to the delegations.

Date and Venue of the Nineteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting

The Conference was pleased to accept the offer of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to host the Nineteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference in the first quarter of 2008.

4 July 2007

Needham's Point, Barbados

A COMMUNITY FOR ALL : DECLARATION ON FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION, ISSUED BY THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE, 1-4 JULY 2007, NEEDHAM'S POINT, BARBADOS

WE, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), meeting at Needham's Point, Barbados, 1-4 July, 2007 on the occasion of the 28th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM;

Determined that the goal of our regional integration process is, first and foremost, to enhance the well-being of all of the citizens of our countries;

Recalling the 1989 Declaration of Grand Anse in which we recognised the deepening of the regional integration process as critical to the Community's ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the changes in the global economy;

Having signed the 2001 Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, which established the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), and, so doing, giving impetus to the creation of new institutional arrangements designed to implement the provisions thereof;

Reaffirming Article 6 (i) of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, which identifies enhanced functional cooperation as one of the fundamental objectives of our Community;

Recalling the immense contribution that functional cooperation has made so far to the regional integration movement and that these purposeful, collaborative, coordinated actions have yielded significant and tangible benefits to the people of the Community, especially in areas such as education, health, sport, culture, sustainable development and security;

Recognising the shortages of skills in key areas, occasioned by continuous migration and the negative effect this poses for development;

Determined also to ensure the equitable distribution among the peoples of CARICOM of the gains realised specifically through the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and generally through the regional integration process;

Fully convinced that functional cooperation, conceived as the body of actions and activities that integrate the Community's political, economic, security and social policy goals with its cultural, scientific, technological and environmental objectives, offers great opportunities for the future and therefore must permeate the work of every council and institution of the Community and in this regard, contribute to the increase in the welfare and security of the Community's citizens;

DECLARE:

1. That improvement of the quality of life of CARICOM citizens is the paramount objective of our Region's integration process;
2. Our determination to make functional cooperation a priority within the Community as one of the principal means by which the benefits of the integration movement are distributed through the length and breadth of the Community, including its Associate Members, and among all its peoples, thereby engendering a "Community for All";

3. That we will achieve this objective primarily using regional institutions, organisations and other entities whose mandates support our efforts and in this regard, pay specific attention to strengthening the capacity of the CARICOM Secretariat and in particular its legal division;

4. Our commitment to take action, at the national level, in support of regional cooperation, particularly through the establishment of appropriate complementary mechanisms

5. That the Task Force to review the status of functional cooperation should be constituted as soon as possible and provide a full report, through the Community Council, to the next meeting of the Conference;

6. That we mandate, in this regard, a comprehensive review of regional institutions with a view effectively to rationalising their functions, funding and structures better to provide common services and coordination of national policies and programmes within the Community;

7. That we will pursue these objectives, as a priority, in the areas outlined below and review, on a regular basis, the progress achieved.

With regard to

8. Health – ‘The Health of the Region is the Wealth of the Region’

Recalling the Nassau Declaration on Health, which stated, inter alia, that ‘the health of the region is the wealth of the region’, as well as the recommendations of the Caribbean Commission on Health and Development,

We:

Emphasise the intrinsic and instrumental value of the health of our people;

Agree to establish the areas of functional cooperation to enable health to contribute to the other fundamental objectives of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, utilising our regional health institutions and partner agencies;

Commit ourselves to working towards creating the conditions for equitable access, by every Community citizen, to adequate health care in each CARICOM Member State.

9. Human and Social Development

Appreciating that the effective development and deployment of our skilled human resources are critical to the achievement of

competitiveness and our economic objectives and confident that social development is a precondition for sustainable prosperity,

We:

With regard to –

(i) Social Welfare

Commit ourselves to establishing effective modalities to ensure the portability of pensions and other social security benefits for our citizens as they move across the Community;

(ii) Culture

Recognise the central role of culture in forging regional identity and in this regard are determined to foster greater collaboration among national cultural entities and ensure that CARIFESTA plays its critical role in developing the region's cultural industries;

(iii) Education and training

Commit ourselves to working towards creating the conditions for equitable access for every CARICOM citizen to the necessary education and training that will allow them to realise their full potential as productive and creative members of our society;

Acknowledge the potential of information and communication technologies to support distance education initiatives and, in that context, continue to support the CARICOM Knowledge Learning Network (CKLN) which will assist in providing the infrastructure necessary to amplify the broad educational opportunities for our citizens;

Also welcome the imminent introduction of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification which will provide a credible, fair and transparent assessment of skills and competencies of Community nationals as they move and work within the region;

(iv) Labour

Welcome the new employment opportunities which have arisen from the establishment of the Single Market and Single Economy and reaffirm our determination to increase them further;

Agree, in this regard, to work towards the creation of regional labour market information systems to facilitate the identification of employment opportunities across the region;

Also agree that where appropriate, the skills and experience of retired citizens of the community and members of the Caribbean Diaspora be tapped and made available for the region's development.

(v) Youth and Development



Acknowledge the importance of the Caribbean Commission on Youth and Development in helping to chart a strategic vision and action programme for the empowerment of our youth.

10. Communication – “Bridging the Divide”

Recognising that the establishment of efficient communication links is critical to community building and is a prerequisite for the unfettered movement of information, goods and people throughout the region.

We:

With regard to-

Transportation

Resolve to develop and implement a regional air and maritime transportation policy designed to create affordable, reliable and safe intra-regional transportation services;

Information and communication technology

Stress the importance of adopting a coordinated approach to the development of and access to information and communication technologies and networks by the populations of the region as a means of achieving greater social cohesion and as a platform for further economic development and participation in the global economy;

Telecommunications

Resolve to establish a framework for the coordination of telecommunications policy and to develop within the Community a single domestic space for telecommunications.

Public Education

Commit ourselves to intensify public education with a view to further involving citizens of the region in the integration process.

11. Crime and security – ‘Securing our Community’

Aware that the security of our people is our highest responsibility and deeply committed to reducing vulnerability to crime and other threats to security within national borders and in our shared economic space, as well as to those emanating from beyond,

We:

Agree to build on the security arrangements successfully implemented for Cricket World Cup 2007 in order to enhance the well-being of the region's citizens and preserve the safety and security of our countries;

Further agree to accelerate the process of intelligence-sharing and human resource development and to develop other relevant bilateral and multilateral security arrangements to supplement limited national resources;

Resolve to develop regional law enforcement instruments which will facilitate a coordinated approach to the scourge of organised crime, international terrorism and financial crimes.

12. Environment –“Preserving and Protecting our Patrimony”

Convinced that the quality of life of our people and the sustainable development of our countries are reliant upon the conservation and protection of our natural environment and the maintenance of our precious biodiversity,

We:

With regard to-

Climate change

Fully support the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCC), a recognised Centre of Excellence, in pursuit of its mandate to coordinate the region's response and adaptation to climate change, which constitutes a real threat to the viability of our states;

Disasters

Welcome the imminent establishment of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, which is to replace CDERA, as a critical institution for mitigating the impact of natural and man-made disasters on our Member States within the broader framework of the region's sustainable development agenda;

Caribbean Sea

Reiterate our support to the initiative to have the Caribbean Sea recognised as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development so as to protect and preserve this essential and vulnerable shared natural resource.

13. Energy

Recognising the necessity of a sustainable, stable and affordable supply of energy for the development of our societies,

We:

Support the work of the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme in the implementation of its mandate and give urgency to the development of renewable energy options to reduce the region's dependence on fossil fuels;

Agree to complete the elaboration of a regional energy policy which will address, among others, issues relating to cost, sustainability and security of supply, bearing in mind the special role of CARICOM net energy-exporting countries;

Instruct the Ministers responsible for Energy urgently to meet in order to address these and other energy-related issues and report, through the Community Council, to the next meeting of the Conference.

14. Agriculture


Underlining the significance of agriculture, not just as an economic sector, but as an expression of a distinctive Caribbean way of life,

We:

Reaffirm our commitment to realising the objectives of the Jagdeo Initiative which seeks to revitalise the agriculture sectors

and stimulate entrepreneurial capacity among the agricultural communities across the region.

15. WE PLEDGE, THEREFORE, TO INVEST IN FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF OUR REGION'S HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL, WHOSE GREATEST DIVIDEND IS THE CREATION OF A COMMUNITY FOR ALL.

 Tags

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