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COMMUNIQUE issued at the conclusion of the Forty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 3-5 July 2023

July 6, 2023



Heads of Government at the Opening Ceremony of the 45th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government

The Forty-fifth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held from 3- 5 July 2023. In acknowledgement of the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973, it was agreed that Trinidad and Tobago would host.

Chair of the Conference, Prime Minister of **Dominica**, the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, presided over the Meeting.

Other Members of the Conference in attendance were: Prime Minister of **Antigua and Barbuda**, Honourable Gaston Browne; Prime Minister of **Barbados**, Honourable Mia Amor Mottley; Prime Minister of **The Bahamas**, Honourable Philip Davis; Prime Minister of **Grenada**, Honourable Dickon Mitchell; President of **Guyana**, His Excellency Mohamed Irfaan Ali; Prime Minister of **Haiti**, the Honourable Dr Ariel Henry; Prime Minister of **Jamaica**, Most Honourable Andrew Holness; Acting Premier, **Montserrat**, Dr. the Hon. Samuel Joseph; Prime Minister of **St**

Kitts and Nevis, Honourable Dr Terrance Drew; Prime Minister of **Saint Lucia**, Honourable Philip Pierre; Prime Minister of **St. Vincent and the Grenadines**, Dr the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves; President of **Suriname**, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, and the Prime Minister of **Trinidad and Tobago**, Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley.

Belize was represented by Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Associate Member States represented were **Bermuda** by Premier, the Hon. Edward David Burt; the **British Virgin Islands**, by Premier, Dr. the Hon. Natalio D. Wheatley and the **Turks and Caicos Islands**, by Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove, Minister of Immigration and Border Services

OPENING CEREMONY

CARICOM Secretary General, Dr Carla N. Barnett, welcomed the Community and guests to the Opening Ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad on 3 July 2023.

She highlighted several of CARICOM's significant achievements over its 50 years of existence and recognised past leaders whose efforts laid the foundation and who have been standard bearers for integration. She also emphasised the importance of involving young people in the integration process, pinpointing CARICOM's Human Resource Development Strategy 2030, to equip young people of the Region with the tools necessary to function effectively in the 21st century.

The Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister of Dominica and Incoming Chair; Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and Conference Host; the Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister of The Bahamas and Outgoing Chair and His Excellency António Guterres, UN Secretary-General also addressed the Conference.

The Prime Ministers spoke of CARICOM's significance, the resilience of the people of the Region, and the need for collective action to advance CARICOM's integration process.

The Chair noted that the 50th Anniversary offered the opportunity to make transformative decisions to shape the future of our Community for the next 50 years. He highlighted reviving the Single Domestic Space that once allowed citizens to traverse freely across the Region, regional air travel, and the situation in Haiti as critical issues on which the Meeting would focus.

"Even as we celebrate this landmark in the evolution of our integration movement, we must be mindful that the symbols and events of celebration do not serve as a distraction from the substance of the heavy lifting still needed to make our Community viable, prosperous, secure and beneficial to all of its people," he said.,

Host Prime Minister, Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, observed that CARICOM has charted its own destiny. "Beyond the doubts, CARICOM is working diligently to serve the people of the Region. While at times, the going may be slow or the outcome may not have been readily apparent, we all continue to build on the strong foundation laid 50 years ago," he said.

Immediate Past Chair, the Honourable Philip Davis, noted that during his tenure, regional cooperation was demonstrated through strong support from the Community for the Bridgetown Initiative; efforts to address crime and violence and the illegal trafficking of guns into the Region, as well as a regional response to mitigate the effects of climate change.

His Excellency António Guterres, UN Secretary General, who was a Special Guest at the Meeting congratulated CARICOM on its 50th Anniversary. He recognised the Region's efforts to extend its Good Offices to Haiti, as well as its leadership on climate action and the plight of Small Island and Low-lying Coastal Developing States, the international financial infrastructure, and financing for development.

Full texts of all the statements are available on the [conference website](#).

CARICOM 50TH ANNIVERSARY ACTIVITIES

Official Flag Raising Ceremony

On 4 July 2023, the Conference of Heads of Government journeyed to Chaguaramas, where the Treaty which established the Community was first signed, for a 50th Anniversary Ceremonial Event. The symbolic occasion featured a flag-raising ceremony, remarks from the Conference Chair, Host Prime Minister and the Dean of the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors.

The Conference also signed a document which was deposited in a time capsule to be opened when the Community celebrates its Centenary.

50th Anniversary Tributes

To mark CARICOM's 50th Anniversary, the Conference received tributes from Prime Minister Han Duck-soo of Korea, other representatives of Foreign Governments and Heads of International Organisations.

These were Hon. David Rutley, **UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Americas and Caribbean)**; Hon. Maninder Sidhu, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada, His Excellency Luis Almagro, **Secretary General of the Organization of American States**; Her Excellency Ms Hua Chunying, **Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China**; Baroness Patricia Scotland, **Secretary General of the Commonwealth**; Ambassador Mauricio Vizcaíno Crespo, **Special Envoy, Mexico**; Sergio Díaz-Granados, **Executive President, CAF Development Bank of Latin America**.

Hon. P. Austin Bramble, former Chief Minister of Montserrat, the only surviving signatory of the Treaty, and Sir Shridath Ramphal, former Foreign Minister of Guyana who was present at the signing of the Treaty in 1973, gave virtual reflections.

All guests congratulated CARICOM on maintaining the integration process over its 50 years. They noted CARICOM's influence and action on critical issues such as the fight against apartheid regimes in Southern Africa, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and small arms, climate change and climate finance, youth advancement, and the situation in Haiti. They committed to ongoing support and cooperation.

The tributes can be viewed on the [CARICOM website](#).

50th Anniversary Concert

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago hosted a 50th Anniversary Concert, "*Golden Rhythms: CARICOM at 50*", at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), where Heads of Government and Delegates to the Meeting were treated to diverse cultural offerings from Member States.

The concert can be viewed on the [CARICOM YouTube Channel](#).

PASSING OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS

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The Meeting observed a minute's silence in honour of Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, former Prime Minister of Barbados. They noted his service of over three decades to his country and the Region, particularly his contribution to the aspirations set out in the Grande Anse Declaration and Work Programme for the Integration Movement.

CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)

The Conference received an update from Lead Head on the CSME, the Prime Minister of Barbados, on progress to implement the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

They agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a timeline of actions necessary to complete policy and regulatory work to bring the regional capital market into being by July 2024. The timeline will include a schedule of meetings of the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP), Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) and Legal Affairs Committee (LAC), and will be presented to the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on the CSME and the CARICOM Bureau of Heads of Government before the end of July 2023.

They also agreed that the initiatives comprising the macroeconomic policy coordination agenda for the CSME, including the operationalizing of the regional capital market, must be tabled for adoption by Member States by July 2024.

The Conference agreed to work towards the free movement of all CARICOM nationals within the Community by 31 March 2024. They acknowledged that there are certain basic guarantees that should be afforded to all CARICOM nationals exercising their right to freely move and remain indefinitely in another Member State of the Community.

In this regard, they agreed that any appropriate amendments to the Revised Treaty to provide for the attendant rights of CARICOM nationals exercising their right to free movement within the Community and accommodate the concerns of all Member States would be completed in the intervening period.

Heads of Government agreed to the further extension of the CARICOM Development Fund's (CDF) Second Contribution Cycle to 31 December 2023. They thanked Dr. Wendell Samuel for his sterling service as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the CDF and acknowledged the COFAP's commitment to an early appointment of a new Chairperson.

The Conference welcomed the support of the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO) for finalising the instruments and policies, in particular for the regional capital markets, and welcomed renewed efforts by the Organisation to establish a CARICOM Stock Exchange.

EXTERNAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

The Meeting received a report from the Lead Head of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on External Negotiations, the Prime Minister of Jamaica. The Committee had considered the key findings of the preliminary assessment of CARICOM's merchandise trade, which represented part of the Region's pivot to a more evidence-based approach.

The Heads of Government agreed to the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee. They endorsed the decision for the Region to prepare for and engage in negotiations to update the Community's existing trade agreements with hemispheric partners with a sense of urgency and a willingness to arrive at mutually beneficial outcomes within the shortest possible timeframe.

They emphasized that CARICOM should strengthen its trade and economic linkages with non-traditional partners, to support further integration into the global economy, and agreed to further explore and strengthen relations with Africa, building on established partnership arrangements.

They also agreed, that as part of its transformational trade agenda, the Community will adopt a more strategic and sustained engagement with traditional hemispheric partners, including by reviewing the scope of arrangements to include services, and by prioritizing cooperation on trade finance, trade facilitation, transportation and payment arrangements under its bilateral trade agreements.

THE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS AGENDA

Heads of Government commended the Lead Head of Government with responsibility for Agriculture and Agriculture Development in the CARICOM Quasi-Cabinet, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, for his leadership towards the achievement of the 25 by 2025 Food and Nutrition Security Initiative.

They acknowledged the steady progress already made to advance the regional agri-food system, resulting in a decrease in the number of people in the Region who face food insecurity between 2022 and 2023.

They deepened their commitment to the removal of all non-tariff barriers to intra-regional trade, de-risking the agricultural sector and increased resource mobilization to help Member States achieve their 25 by 2025 target.

Heads welcomed the offer of the President of Guyana of training for 300 CARICOM nationals in hydroponics and aquaculture, at least half of whom should be women.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE FINANCE

Heads of Government emphasized the critical importance of urgent efforts to address financing to address the impact of climate change. To this end, a Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee was established, comprising Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Suriname and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, to define the Regional approach for preparations for the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28).

They agreed on the need for strong political advocacy from the Region on key action areas to keep the 1.5 temperature goal within reach, focusing on areas of finance for adaptation and loss and damage, improving access to finance for SIDS, de-risking, debt sustainability and innovation as key points.

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The Conference also agreed to actively support the Caribbean Development Bank's proposal to host the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage.

HAITI

Heads of Government discussed the crisis in Haiti and agreed to issue a Statement **attached**.

ADVANCING REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Engagement with Guests

His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Al Jaber, President–Designate, COP 28

Heads of Government received the President–Designate of COP 28. He extended 50th Anniversary congratulations to the Conference.

The President Designate outlined that his presidency would focus on an action-oriented, consensus-driven approach to climate change mitigation, with a view to protecting nature and enhancing food security.

Heads of Government welcomed his proposed new framework, which included efforts to keep pressure on donor countries regarding financing and targets for the reduction of carbon emissions. They insisted on the need for urgent and decisive measures.

His Excellency Paul Kagame, President, Republic of Rwanda

The Meeting received His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda.

He congratulated CARICOM on its 50th Anniversary and highlighted its many accomplishments and influence as an enduring and respected integration movement. President Kagame pinpointed transportation, telecommunications and regional security as areas for bilateral mutual support.

Heads of Government welcomed his presence. They highlighted the close linkages and the ongoing friendship he has shown to the Region and noted existing fruitful bilateral relationships with individual CARICOM Member States. They welcomed his offer to support CARICOM efforts towards a solution for Haiti and committed to continued deepening of the alliance.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US Department of State

and Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, US House of Representatives

Both leaders expressed their honour at having been invited to address the Conference on CARICOM's golden anniversary.

The Secretary of State outlined current initiatives, including the creation of a new position for a Coordinator for Caribbean Firearms Prosecutions to help maximise information sharing to support the prosecution of traffickers.

Heads of Government welcomed the high-level encounters between the Region and the United States, as well as commitments from recent engagements towards regional strategic priorities. They noted that CARICOM is intent on working jointly with its partners to address its pressing challenges, such as energy security, food security and development financing.

They also outlined challenges which impede regional development, including correspondent banking, blacklisting and access to concessional financing. They also stressed the importance of reforming the global financial system to mobilise short-term liquidity for crisis response and long-term funding for sustainable development, as proposed under the Bridgetown Initiative.

Further, the Heads of Government underlined their continued deep concern at the increased flow of illegal guns into the Region, which has resulted in an increase in crime and violence. They reiterated their call for the United States to disrupt the trade by supporting efforts to manage porous borders, sharing intelligence and effecting relevant legislation.

Republic of Korea

Heads of Government welcomed the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea and acknowledged that country's support for the Community.

They expressed appreciation for the Republic of Korea's ongoing efforts to strengthen ties with CARICOM as evidence of the country's commitment to building long-term and sustainable cooperation.

They also welcomed the Prime Minister's offer of deepening cooperation in areas such as climate change, marine environment, food security, and renewable energy, both in the public and private sectors, in the years ahead.

Heads of Government further welcomed his announcement of an increase in contribution to the Korea-CARICOM Cooperation Fund next year as a clear demonstration of his country's commitment to CARICOM.

Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF)

Heads of Government welcomed Dr Sergio Diaz Granados, Executive President, CAF Development Bank of Latin America.

They expressed appreciation for the assistance already provided to some Member States, including non-members of the Bank.

Heads of Government agreed that those Member States that are not yet members of the Bank would consider taking steps to join as soon as possible.

SANCTIONS

Cuba

Heads of Government reiterated their call for the lifting of the unjust financial, economic and trade embargo against the Government and people of Cuba.

Venezuela

Urged the removal of the sanctions on Venezuela to allow countries in the Region to benefit from the PetroCaribe initiative and for further progress on the exploration of the cross-border natural gas fields between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

CRICKET WORLD CUP 2024

Heads of Government exchanged views with the President of Cricket West Indies (CWI), Dr. Kishore Shallow, on the state of the game in the Region and the preparations for the hosting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket World Cup 2024 (CWC2024) in the Region.

Heads of Government expressed their profound disappointment at the performance of the Men's team in the ICC Qualifying Tournament being held in Zimbabwe and congratulated the Women's team on their victory against Ireland in the series being played in the Region.

They agreed that a team of Heads of Government will meet with Cricket West Indies (CWI) in the week of 10 July to finalise matters related to the hosting of CWC 2024 and continue discussions on other issues raised during the meeting.

Heads of Government also agreed that ongoing collaboration with Cricket West Indies and other stakeholders was critical to address the crisis in West Indies cricket.

Heads of Government appointed the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to lead the Prime Ministerial Sub-committee on Cricket.

BORDER ISSUES:

Guyana-Venezuela

Heads of Government acknowledged the update provided by Guyana on the case before the International Court of Justice. They noted the overwhelming decision of the Court of 6 April 2023 to reject Venezuela's Preliminary Objection, which sought to make the United Kingdom an indispensable party to the proceedings. They further noted the Court's decision that, in keeping with the provisions of the 1966 Geneva Agreement, it had jurisdiction to adjudicate on the merits of Guyana's claim regarding the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award that had determined the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela.

They reiterated their continued support for the judicial process and the security, maintenance and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

Belize-Guatemala

The Heads of Government received an update on the claim brought by the Republic of Guatemala against Belize in which the International Court of Justice is asked to resolve "any and all legal claims of Guatemala against Belize to land and insular territories and to any maritime areas pertaining to those territories, and to declare the rights therein of both Parties and to determine the boundaries between their respective territories and areas". They were informed that Belize filed its Rejoinder in the first week of June 2023.

The Heads of Government expressed concern over Guatemalan illegal activities in and near the Adjacency Zone, and the deforestation of Belize's national parks and protected areas along the Belize-Guatemala border due to the continuing illegal incursions by Guatemalan nationals. They urged both countries to abide by the Confidence Building Measures and conclude a protocol to apply to the Sarstoon River and the Gulf of Honduras.

They reiterated their support for the critical work carried out by the Organization of American States (OAS) in defusing tensions along the border and urged the international community to continue its support for the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone.

The Heads of Government reiterated their unequivocal support for Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Heads of Government received a report of Special Consultations with the Associate Members and agreed that there would be regular consultations with the Associate Members prior to the Regular July Meetings of the Conference.

Heads of Government urged the completion of processes for formal inclusion of Martinique and Curacao as Associate Members of CARICOM and looked forward to welcoming Martinique as the sixth Associate Member of CARICOM at the Forty-Sixth Conference of Heads of Government to be held in Guyana in February 2024.

APPRECIATION

Heads of Government expressed their appreciation to the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago for their excellent hospitality and the arrangements as hosts of the meeting.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

Heads of Government accepted the invitation of Guyana to host the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference in the last week of February 2024.

Heads of Government also agreed to hold a retreat in Dominica on 18-19 August 2023.

6 July 2023

STATEMENT ON HAITI


Heads of Government deliberated over the complex crisis enveloping Haiti and expressed their grave concern over the deep humanitarian, security and governance crises.

In that regard, they noted the need for the immediate creation of a Humanitarian and Security Stabilization Corridor under the mandate of a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution and agreed to seek support from international partners to help finance its establishment and the strengthening of security in Haiti.

Heads of Government are of the view that approaches should be made to Rwanda, Kenya and other willing international partners to support the strengthening of the Haitian National Police (HNP) and the establishment of the corridor.

They welcomed the statement by the Prime Minister of Haiti that he will not seek election but will head a Transition Government to secure the arrangements to transition the country from the security and humanitarian crises until the holding of credible, free, and fair elections.

Heads of Government acknowledged that the CARICOM Eminent Persons Group (EPG) will continue to work with the Haitian Government and stakeholders in their efforts to find a Haitian-led solution to the crisis.

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