



# PRESS RELEASE

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NO: 51/2014

DATE: 12 March 2014

*(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana)*  
**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE  
TWENTY-FIFTH INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF  
GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM),  
10-11 MARCH 2014,  
BUCCAMENT, ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

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The Twenty-Fifth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held at the Buccament Bay Resort, Buccament, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from 10-11 March 2014. Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who assumed the Chair of the Conference for the six-month period commencing 1 January 2014, presided.

Other Members of the Conference in attendance were: the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Dr. the Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer; the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Rt. Honourable Perry G. Christie; the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Honourable Freundel J. Stuart; the Prime Minister of Belize, the Honourable Dean O. Barrow; the Prime Minister of Dominica, the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit; the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell; the President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Donald R. Ramotar; the President of Haiti, His Excellency Michel J. Martelly; the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller; the Premier of Montserrat, the Honourable Reuben T. Meade; the Prime Minister of the Federation of St. Kitts and

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Page 1 of 14

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Nevis, Rt. Honourable Dr. Denzil L. Douglas; the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr. the Honourable Kenny D. Anthony; and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Suriname was represented by the Honourable Raymond Sapoen, Minister of Trade and Industry. Associate Members in attendance were the Premier of Anguilla, the Honourable Hubert B. Hughes, and the Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Honourable Dr. Rufus W. Ewing.

His Excellency Serge Letchimy, President of the Regional Council of Martinique, a Special Guest, had an exchange of views with the Heads of Government.

## **OPENING SESSION**

The Opening Session was addressed by the Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Immediate Past Chair, the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; and the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque.

Secretary-General LaRocque noted the sense of unity and solidarity which brought the Community together at the best and worst of times must now be the central force that drives it to find a route to ignite growth in our economies.

In his statement, he stressed that “we must summon that Spirit of Community, that clear understanding that we are all in this together. We are all CARICOM. We must be proud of what we have created as a Community and embrace that sense of being part of that Community by identifying with it unreservedly.”

Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar gave a synopsis of her six-month tenure as Chair of the Community which ended last December, outlining some of the achievements, including advances in the reform process and the work of the Commissions on Reparations and on the Economy.

The Prime Minister called for more of the Community’s Member States to ratify the United

Page 2 of 14

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Nations Arms Trade Treaty which had been adopted last April.

“In addition, I want to urge CARICOM Member States to prepare to participate, once more with a unified approach, in the negotiations that will ensue before and after the ATT comes into force,” she added.

The Prime Minister said that “it is without question that Trinidad and Tobago takes its responsibility very seriously in linking our progress to the Region’s success. As one of the founding members of the Community, we have worked hard to build a reputation on good faith that wherever we seek our best diplomatic and bilateral interests on the global stage, so too will we seek the best interests of CARICOM.”

The Chairman pointed to implementation of the provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas as a sign of love and care for CARICOM.

“We must ensure that the organs of the Community work as intended and that its decisions are implemented in each nation-state of the Community; and ... that the political leaders and populations in each nation-state possess the requisite political will for CARICOM’s optimal functioning, as structured,” he added.

Prime Minister Gonsalves posited that “each government is enjoined in its responsibility, nay its solemn obligation, to put appropriate institutional arrangements in its national executive and administrative apparatuses to facilitate the speedy and efficacious implementation of CARICOM’s decisions.”

“The success of the CARICOM enterprise truly begins with the political leaderships, though it does not end with us alone. It ends with us, our national populations, and national institutions, massaged by the balm of our regional apparatuses,” the Chairman added.

## **ADVANCING THE REGIONAL ICT AGENDA**

Heads of Government reaffirmed that ICT is a priority and has a role in developing all sectors and advancing all regional initiatives and imperatives. Heads of Government agreed that developing a CARICOM Digital Economy is key to changing the socio-economic profile of the

Region and for creating jobs, especially for the Community's youth, new opportunities and engendering innovation and competitiveness.

They agreed that ICT efforts should be undertaken in tandem with the Reform Process of the Region and that sustained efforts in the years 2014-2015 should be on building a Single ICT space as part of the digital layer of the CSME. This includes addressing issues related to roaming rates and improved broadband service across the Region.

A road-map for the implementation of the Single ICT space is to be presented for consideration at their July 2015 Meeting. They also agreed to accord priority attention to cyber-security.

Heads of Government expressed appreciation to the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr the Hon. Keith Mitchell, for his leadership in advancing the ICT Agenda at this meeting. They also commended the CARICOM Secretariat and regional organizations: CTU, CBU, CKLNA, CARICAD, and CARISCIENCE in supporting the Lead Head for ICT matters and reaffirmed the coordinating role of the CARICOM Secretariat.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Heads of Government, in keeping with a decision made at their Thirty-Fourth Regular Meeting in July 2013, discussed the issue of Education and Human Resource Development in CARICOM. They received a presentation which highlighted the need to focus on Human Resource Development across all ages and within all sectors, including the public sector and gave specific focus to the formal education system.

They considered the current state of education in the Region and acknowledged the significant gains which had been made over the past decades. They nevertheless lamented the inherent inefficiencies and wastage in education and training systems.

Heads of Government noted the less than optimum outcomes for students at all levels, matched against the requirements of 21st century societies and economies. They endorsed the need for a holistic approach to transformation of education which would make more efficient use of national and regional resources, including Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), to develop and implement solutions to the challenges outlined.

Heads of Government also recognised the lack of capacity in the Region to deal effectively with students with special needs, and identified this as an area for focused attention. They noted the importance of research and teacher training, the sharing of best practices and technical and professional resources.

Heads of Government mandated the establishment of a Commission on Human Resource Development to shape a Regional Education and Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy. The Strategy would form the basis for converged action by Member States and relevant institutions and create a framework for the CARICOM Education Agenda. The Commission is expected to collaborate with Education Ministries and other portfolios, with key civil society actors, in particular labour and the private sector, on perspectives and key proposed actions with regard to the Strategy.

Heads of Government commended the Rt. Honourable Dr. Denzil Douglas, Lead Head of Government with responsibility for Human Resource Development and Health. They expressed appreciation for his leadership in advancing the HRD agenda at this meeting and recalled his similar role in the area of health, particularly in addressing HIV/AIDS through PANCAP, NCDs and with the establishment of CARPHA. They also expressed appreciation to the Prime Minister for his commitment and dedication to the Community as the longest serving member of the Conference.

Heads of Government also expressed appreciation for the work of the CARICOM Cluster on Human Resource Development in supporting the Lead Head in the area of Human Resource Development. The Cluster is led by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and includes the CARICOM Secretariat, the University of the West Indies (UWI), the University of Guyana (UG), the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network Agency (CKLNA) and the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD).

## **FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Heads of Government welcomed and endorsed the recommendations of the CARICOM Commission on the Economy established last September to advise on a sustainable growth strategy for the Community. The recommendations are aimed at restoring confidence in the

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Page 5 of 14

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economic management and governance of CARICOM economies and laying the foundation for an innovative resource mobilisation strategy to support the Growth Agenda. They therefore focussed on the broad areas of

- Fiscal Sustainability (including Debt Management);
- Private Sector Stimulation and the Business Regulatory Environment;
- Transitioning to Sustainable Growth;
- Resource Mobilisation.

The Commission will continue to work as it advances the implementation of the recommendations including preparation of an implementation timetable to be presented at the July 2014 meeting.

Heads of Government agreed to have a high-level consultation with Leaders of Commerce and Industry at their July Meeting. This consultation would address the institutional reform agenda and the scope for promoting public-private partnerships to support the infrastructural development required to promote a vibrant and dynamic private sector and sustainable growth in the Community.

Heads of Government also agreed to consider the establishment of a regional mechanism to advise Member States on their debt management strategies and endorsed the Commonwealth Small States Debt initiative which is led by the Honourable Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis.

They re-emphasised the importance for Ministers of Finance to continue their active involvement in the on-going work of the Commission and the implementation of agreed recommendations.

## **CARICOM-CANADA TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT**

Heads of Government received a report on the status of negotiations for a CARICOM-Canada Trade and Development Agreement which are expected to conclude no later than June 2014. They noted the state of play of negotiations arising from the fifth and sixth round of

negotiations and expressed expectations of further progress being achieved in the continuation of the Sixth Round at the end of March.

Heads of Government reiterated the Region's objective of negotiating a pro-development agreement which takes account of the differences in the levels of development between CARICOM and Canada and which would support sustainable economic and social development of the peoples of the Region.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Heads of Government noted the on-going challenges posed by climate change and sea-level rise to the Region. They cited the recent disasters occasioned by unusual and unseasonal rainfall in Dominica, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in December 2013 as pertinent reminders of the effects of Climate Change.

Heads of Government commended the work of the National Emergency Management Organisations for their effective coordination of relief efforts in their respective jurisdictions; the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) for their rapid and effective response to the situation. They also commended members of the public, corporate citizens, regional organisations and Governments of the Community and other countries for the tangible support provided to the affected Member States.

Heads of Government emphasized the need to enhance the Region's engagement in the Climate Change negotiation process and to increase the Region's access to available Climate Change financial resources. They agreed on the establishment of a CARICOM Task Force on Sustainable Development to provide guidance to Caribbean negotiators and the Region's political leaders on Sustainable Development issues and in particular, those related to the Climate Change and SIDS negotiations and also the process related the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

With specific reference to Climate Financing, Heads of Government also lamented the fact that much of the promised resources had not been forthcoming but emphasised the need for the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) to work with Member States in order to have projects prepared to access financing when it did become available.

Heads of Government committed to participating and engaging in important meetings and fora, including the UN Climate Change Summit in September 2014 and the Third UN SIDS International Meeting in Samoa, also in September.

## **MEMBERSHIP AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY**

Heads of Government adopted the principle of an “acquis communautaire” for Membership in CARICOM, which constitutes the terms and conditions of Membership that are mandatory for any new Member. They considered the proposed process leading to accession by any country applying for Membership in the Community and noted the applications for Associate Membership of the Community by French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Curaçao and Sint Maarten.

In this regard, Heads of Government welcomed the powerful statement made by the President of the Regional Council of Martinique who underlined the desire of his territory to "contribute to building a bigger Caribbean house". The Conference endorsed the process established for the consideration of the applications for Associate Membership.

## **RULING OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CONSTITUTIONAL COURT ON NATIONALITY**

Heads of Government commended the Prime Ministers of Trinidad and Tobago and of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the firm manner in which, as Chair of the Bureau of the Conference of Heads of Government, they represented the principled views of the Community on the situation with respect to the Dominican Republic Constitutional Court ruling on nationality which gravely affected Dominicans of Haitian descent.

Heads of Government reaffirmed that the ruling, which stripped nationality from tens of thousands of Dominicans, disproportionately affecting Dominicans of Haitian descent, was abhorrent and discriminatory and therefore unacceptable. They expressed grave concern that the promise of the Dominican Republic President to have legislation tabled by 27 February, 2014, to address the grave human rights effects of the ruling had not yet been fulfilled. In this regard, they recommended that the new legislation be brought to the attention of the next meeting of the Haiti-Dominican Republic Bilateral Commission.



## REPARATIONS FOR NATIVE GENOCIDE AND SLAVERY

Heads of Government examined progress at both national and regional levels with regard to the Region's efforts to address the issue of reparations for native genocide and slavery. In keeping with the decisions of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the Conference in July 2013, eight Member States have now developed National Reparations Committees and others are in the process of establishment. The Regional Reparations Committee, comprising the Chairpersons of National Committees has prepared a Draft Regional Strategic and Operational Plan for a Caribbean Reparatory Justice Programme (CRJP), which was accepted by the Heads of Government as a basis for further action.

Among the major elements elaborated in the Plan were those related to the request for a Full Formal Apology by the Governments of Europe involved in the trans-atlantic slave trade; the establishment of Caribbean Cultural institutions through which the Caribbean experience could be scientifically told; an Indigenous Peoples Development Programme; Technology Transfer; and Debt Cancellation. The Action Plan is to be discussed in greater detail by the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on Reparations, chaired by the Prime Minister of Barbados.

The Heads of Government also expressed support for the convening of a Conference between Caribbean and European Leaders which would provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions on reparatory justice.

The Heads of Government encouraged Member States to continue the necessary research and documentation in order to ready themselves for addressing claims with regard to reparations.

Heads of Government commended the University of the West Indies and, in particular, Professor Hilary Beckles, Chair of the Regional Commission for the leadership provided on the issue.

## INTER-FAITH ENGAGEMENT

Heads of Government received a Report on the First CARICOM Inter-Faith Conference held in Antigua and Barbuda on 17 February 2014. They recognised the important role which Faith-Based Organisations (FBO) could play in several aspects of Regional Development. They commended the effort spearheaded by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Dr. the Honourable Baldwin W. Spencer to engage FBOs at the Regional level.

Heads of Government also encouraged Member States to consider formal Inter-Faith engagement at the national level in order to structure regional engagement.

### **THE USE OF MARIJUANA FOR MEDICAL/HEALTH PURPOSES**

Heads of Government engaged in intense discussions on the issue of marijuana, including its medical use and aspects of the decriminalising of small quantities for recreational use. They also explored the economic benefits that might be derived from marijuana cultivation.

Concerns were raised, especially regarding the potential public and mental health aspects of its use. Heads of Government recognised the need for careful in-depth research of the various implications of the measures contemplated and mandated the establishment of a Regional Commission to address the issues identified and any others deemed relevant in order to provide clear guidance with regard to decisions to be taken. The Commission is expected to report to the Regular Meeting of the Conference in July 2014.

### **SITUATION IN THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS**

Heads of Government received an update on the situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands which they will continue to monitor. They expressed their support for the full restoration of democracy in the TCI on terms driven by the people of the territory. Heads of Government continued to look forward to a response from the United Kingdom Government to the CARICOM-TCI Mission Report, which was submitted for its attention.

### **BORDER ISSUES:**

#### **Belize–Guatemala**

Heads of Government welcomed the latest developments between Belize and Guatemala to activate their Joint Commission to promote cooperative relations between both countries. They also welcomed their renewed commitment to preserve the Special Agreement of 2008, which commits both parties to resort to the International Court of Justice for a final determination of the Guatemalan claim.

Heads of Government expressed support for the Road Map signed on 24 January 2014 by Belize and Guatemala and by the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) as witness, which aims at strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing mutual trust conducive to setting a new date to hold the referendum in both countries. They called on the international community to support the efforts of both countries and the OAS in this endeavour and reiterated their support for both countries in their abiding commitment to the Special Agreement.

Heads of Government expressed their continued support for the territorial integrity of Belize.

### **Guyana-Venezuela**

Heads of Government noted that Guyana and Venezuela had initiated dialogue following the detention on 10 October 2013 by a Venezuelan armed naval vessel of the seismic vessel, the RV Teknik Perdana which was under contract with Anadarko and which was conducting a multi-beam survey of the seafloor in Guyana's exclusive economic zone.

Heads of Government also noted that the Foreign Ministers of both countries met in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on 17 October 2013 and agreed that the two countries would explore mechanisms within the context of international law to address the issue of maritime delimitation; and that further their technical teams would meet within a period of four months to exchange views on how such delimitation could proceed. They further took note that the Venezuelan Government had requested a postponement of the technical meeting given the political situation in that country. Heads of Government expressed the hope that the initiative to address the issue of maritime delimitation would not lose momentum.

Heads of Government acknowledged that despite this incident, Guyana and Venezuela continued to maintain stable and satisfactory relations.

They reiterated their support for the maintenance of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Guyana and took note of the continued confidence that both States have in the Good Offices Process of the United Nations Secretary-General under the Geneva Agreement of 1966 with the re-appointment in October 2013 of Professor Norman Girvan as the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in that Process.

Heads of Government expressed regrets over Professor Girvan's illness due to an accident last December in which he sustained serious injuries and conveyed their best wishes for his quick recovery.

#### **ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING LEGISLATION IN GUYANA**

Heads of Government considered the situation with respect to Anti-Money Laundering legislation in Guyana and issued a statement which is attached to this Communique.

#### **ARMS TRADE TREATY**

Heads of Government agreed to endorse the bid by Trinidad and Tobago to host the Secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty.

#### **CARICOM CHAMPION ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FUND**

Heads of Government welcomed the deposit of US\$ 50,000 by Suriname to a special account in relation to the launch of the Fund.

#### **APPRECIATION**

The Heads of Government of the three countries, Dominica, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, affected by the heavy rains of Christmas 2013, expressed their gratitude for the assistance rendered by the other Member States of the Community. They expressed the view that the actions of their colleagues demonstrated the solidarity and sense of Community so necessary for the progress of the integration movement.

Heads of Government also expressed their deepest appreciation to the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, led by Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting. They particularly noted that the Meeting took place less than three months after the country was devastated by the heavy rains of Christmas 2013 and praised the efforts made to ensure its success.

The recent appointments at the CARICOM Secretariat of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ambassador Manorma Soeknandan of Suriname and the Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development, Dr. Douglas Slater of St. Vincent and the Grenadines were noted with satisfaction.

## **SIGNINGS**

### **Treaties/Agreements opened for signature**

The Protocol to amend Article 83 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy was adopted and opened for signature.

The Heads of Government noted the importance of the Protocol in clarifying the flexibility afforded to the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) in its administration of the Common External Tariff (CET).

The Prime Ministers of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines signed the Protocol at the meeting.

### **Treaties/Agreements available for signature**

Antigua and Barbuda signed the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Accreditation Agency for Education and Training.

### **Deposit of Instruments of Ratification**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago deposited its Instrument of Ratification to the Amendment to the Agreement establishing the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network Agency.

## **STATEMENT BY THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY ON THE ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING LEGISLATION BEFORE THE GUYANA PARLIAMENT**

The Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community regards with profound dismay, Guyana's inability to enact the requisite legislation aimed at implementing the recommendations of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) to address deficiencies in its anti-money laundering regime.

We recognise that Guyana's failure to enact this Bill will result in Guyana being blacklisted by CFATF and consequently have far-reaching implications and, indeed, repercussions on the economy of Guyana as well as that of every territory of the Region. It will affect the cost of processing international transactions and will adversely affect trade and financial flows in the Region. The non-passage of the Bill will also retard the regional integration enterprise, limit the opportunity for growth in Guyana and the Region and result in hardship for the people of Guyana, and indeed, of the Region.

We call on all relevant parties to enact the necessary legislation in the national and regional interest.