



# COMMUNIQUÉ

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT, P.O. Box 10827, TURKEYEN, GREATER GEORGETOWN, GUYANA;

Tel: 592-222-0001/0075; Fax: 592-222-0171/0095;

Website: [CARICOM.org](http://CARICOM.org) | Blog: [CARICOM Today](http://CARICOM Today) | Email: [communications@caricom.org](mailto:communications@caricom.org)

02 March, 2015

## COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

The Twenty-Seventh Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held at Placencia, Belize on 16-17 February 2016. The Prime Minister of Belize, the Honourable Dean Barrow, chaired the proceedings.

Other members of the Conference in attendance were: the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Honourable Gaston Browne; the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Honourable Freundel Stuart; the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell; the President of Guyana, His Excellency Brigadier (ret'd) David Granger; the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, Dr. the Honourable Timothy Harris; and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley.

The Bahamas was represented by the Honourable Frederick Mitchell, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, the Commonwealth of Dominica was represented by Senator the Honourable Francine Baron, Minister of Foreign Affairs and CARICOM Affairs; Haiti was represented by Ambassador Guy Lamothe. Jamaica was represented by Senator the Honourable A.J. Nicholson, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; Saint Lucia was represented by the Honourable Alva Baptiste, Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation; St. Vincent and the Grenadines was represented by the Honourable Camillo Gonsalves, Minister of Economic Planning and Sustainable Development; Suriname was represented by the Vice-President, His Excellency Ashwin Adhin.

Associate Member, the Turks and Caicos Islands, was represented by Ms. Clara Gardiner, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Border Control and Employment.

Also in attendance was His Excellency Ambassador Patrick Gomes, Secretary-General of the African Caribbean Pacific Group of States (ACP).

## OPENING

The Chairman, the Honourable Dean Barrow, the immediate Past Chairman, the Rt. Honourable Freundel Stuart and the Secretary-General, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque addressed the Opening Ceremony.

Prime Minister Stuart in giving a brief report on his tenure, highlighted the Community's success at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP21) on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris. He also recognised the steps being taken towards the establishment of clear rules about how the Conference takes and implements decisions. Prime Minister Stuart lauded the Region's support for Dominica after Tropical Storm Erika. Using the tropical storm as an example, he said that one of the essential principles that must permeate our thoughts, words, and deeds as a Region, was the need for an unshakeable commitment to unity in the face of adversity.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that in order for CARICOM to fulfill its immense promise, "first, we should look at the strengths of our movement and seek to retain them at all costs; second, we must look backward at important elements that we have lost in the regional integration movement and seek to reclaim them; third, we must look inward at our movement to carefully identify those aspects that hinder us, which we can discard, and should do so with some urgency."

Prime Minister Barrow speaking of the issue of correspondent banking and particularly de-risking said it had "absolutely cataclysmic ramifications" for the Community. He said it deprived our banks of the ability to keep US deposits, do wire transfers, facilitate credit card settlements for their local clients.

The Chairman added, "The implications of this for our international trade, for our remittances, for our structures of production, consumption and investment, are so obvious as to require little further elaboration".

The Prime Minister said that the Community needed to settle on achievable goals for the immediate and medium-term, and specify and take the necessary steps for realization on a time and action basis. He added, "I believe that our efforts must focus on retaining and improving all that has worked".

Secretary-General LaRocque emphasised the success which collective action had brought to the Community citing the recent COP 21 in Paris as a fine example. The Secretary-General noted that given the dynamics of the global situation, some of the issues impacting on the Community emanated from outside our borders. He pointed out, however, that they had a direct effect on the economic, environmental and social life of the Region.

"Such situations," he said, "while challenging, present us with further opportunities to strengthen our unity and generate a collective response."

## **SECURITY**

Heads of Government discussed the issue of crime and security and agreed to increase co-operation and collaboration in this area.

Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Lead Head of Government for Security in the quasi Cabinet was the first signatory to the Protocol Amending the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to Incorporate the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) as an Organ of the Community and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) as an Institution of the Community.

## **CORRESPONDENT BANKING**

Heads of Government deplored the progressive decline in correspondent banking relationships available to the banking sector in Member States, as a result of the de-risking strategies employed by the global banks. They opined that the withdrawal, restricted access and /or the higher cost of such services, allegedly in response to the heightened regulatory posture of regulatory authorities, would destabilize the financial sector in Member States with deleterious effects on growth and economic progress, as well as national security.

Heads of Government emphasised that CARICOM Member States have complied with all global regulatory standards, including those established by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Global Forum, and have been scrutinized in every detail by the IMF and other multilateral institutions. Indeed, they characterized the actions of the correspondent banks as an economic assault and was therefore tantamount to an economic blockade against Member States.

Heads of Government therefore agreed to the appointment of a high-level advocacy group, led by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda. This group will be charged with the responsibility to represent the interest of the Region in addressing the issue, including an approach to the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, as well as the United States Congress, to create greater international awareness of the challenge confronting the Community.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Heads of Government welcomed the Paris Agreement which was the outcome of the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in France in December 2015. They noted that CARICOM had a major interest in the outcome of this Conference, since, as SIDS, they stand to be among the most affected by Climate Change.

Heads of Government expressed their appreciation for the leadership of the then Chairman of Conference, Rt. Honourable Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados and Dr. the Honourable Kenny Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia and Lead Head of Government for Sustainable Development, at the COP 21 which resulted in the positive outcome for the Community. They acknowledged the sterling contribution of the Region's negotiators, the

Task Force on Sustainable Development, led by Dr. the Honourable James Fletcher of Saint Lucia, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the CARICOM Secretariat to the Community's achievements at the Conference.

Heads of Government recognised the need to capitalize on the achievements at COP 21 by working towards improving the national and regional capacities, to take advantage of the opportunities that the Agreement provided for addressing the impacts of Climate Change.

Heads of Government agreed to maintain the diplomatic demarche at international levels in support of the 1.5°C goal, noting that at the current levels of commitment, temperature rise would be more than 2.7 °C.

The Conference urged active participation in the high-level signing ceremony for the Paris Agreement, to be convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, on the 22 April 2016 in New York. The Conference also urged signature of the Agreement and deposit of instruments of ratification at that time or soonest thereafter.

Heads of Government noted the various opportunities for climate financing. They agreed to elevate the importance of Readiness Programming in accordance with the Green Climate Fund, to include the mainstreaming of climate change in National Development Plans, in order to facilitate access to climate financing.

Heads of Government further agreed that the Task Force on Sustainable Development led by Dr the Honourable James Fletcher and the team of negotiators and experts should continue their work to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement.

Heads of Government resolved to remain actively engaged in the UNFCCC processes at the various levels to support implementation of the Paris Agreement.

## **ZIKA**

Heads of Government expressed deep concern about the health and economic effects of the outbreak of the Zika Virus infection in the Community and they undertook to take a structured approach to deal with the disease.

In that regard, Heads of Government endorsed a course of action to address the spread of this disease and other diseases spread by the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito including dengue and chikungunya. They mandated CARPHA and the CARICOM Secretariat to report to the Council for Human and Social Development on Health (COHSOD – Health) on the implementation and effectiveness of the course of action.

Heads of Government noted that the most effective forms of prevention are reducing mosquito populations by eliminating their breeding sites, especially through the management of containers which collect and store water in and around households.

Heads of Government urged the population at large to join in a multi-sectoral approach to help eliminate the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito which would include continuous public

education, and involve the health, education, tourism, media, telecommunications sectors as well as local government and private enterprises.

Heads of Government endorsed the proposal for a Caribbean Mosquito Awareness Week to be inaugurated in May 2016.

Heads of Government acknowledged the valuable role of CARPHA in the coordination of effective responses to public health crises in the Region, including through laboratory testing, advice and technical assistance to Member States.

## **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY**

Heads of Government received a report from a Technical Working Group (TWG) on issues related to Associate Membership in CARICOM.

Heads of Government recognised the interest of six territories in becoming Associate Members and considered the analytical report in the context of seeking to review the guiding principles for the consideration of applications for Associate Membership.

Heads of Government noted that the ongoing discussions were taking place at a time when reform of the Community was being undertaken. They also noted the resource challenges that would be faced by the Secretariat with respect to any future enlargement of the Community.

Heads of Government recognised the need for the articulation of an enlargement policy which should be submitted for their consideration at the July meeting of the Conference.

## **BORDER ISSUES**

### **Belize-Guatemala Relations**

Heads of Government received an update on efforts to resolve Guatemala's claims over Belize's territory.

Heads of Government expressed their hope that a referendum would be called early in both countries to decide on whether to submit Guatemala's claims to the International Court of Justice for a final ruling.

Heads of Government encouraged both Belize and Guatemala to continue their efforts at constructive engagement and building of friendly relations for the betterment of their peoples.

Heads of Government recognized the important role of the Organization of American States (OAS) in support of the efforts of the Belize and Guatemala governments to secure lasting peace and development. They called on the international community to support the efforts of these two countries, and to be especially generous in their support for the sustained involvement of the OAS in these efforts.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the maintenance and preservation of Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

## **Guyana-Venezuela Relations**

Heads of Government received an update on the recent developments with respect to the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela.

They noted that February 17, 2016, marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreement of 1966 between the Parties, which was intended to provide a solution to the controversy arising from Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Arbitral Award, which definitively settled the land boundary between Guyana and Venezuela, is null and void.

Heads of Government also noted that the Secretary General of the United Nations, having had discussions with the Heads of State of Guyana and Venezuela in September 2015, has since made a proposal to the two countries on the way forward towards a decisive end to the controversy.

Heads of Government expressed their full support for the role of the United Nations Secretary General and his efforts, in keeping with the provisions of the Geneva Agreement, to bring the controversy to a definitive and judicious conclusion.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the maintenance and preservation of Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

## **CRICKET GOVERNANCE**

Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the development of West Indies cricket and applauded the recent performance of the 2016 World Champion under 19 Team.

Heads of Government discussed the Report of the Joint Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on Cricket and the Cricket Governance Committee held on 9 February 2016.

They undertook an in-depth review of the governance issues with respect to the West Indies Cricket Board Inc.

Heads of Government endorsed the recommendations of the Final Report of the Review Panel on the Governance of Cricket of October 2015 and affirmed that they must be implemented.

Heads of Government agreed to explore all options available to achieve the desired outcome of improved governance of West Indies cricket and undertook to inform concerned parties of their position.

## **FUTURE OF THE ACP GROUP OF STATES**

Heads of Government received a presentation on the Future of the African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). They noted the intervention of the Secretary-General of the ACP, Ambassador Patrick. I. Gomes who participated in the discussions.

## **RELATIONS WITH THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Heads of Government expressed concern at the continuing grave human rights situation of Dominicans of Haitian descent threatened by statelessness and the precarious humanitarian situation of undocumented Haitians in the Dominican Republic who have been deported to Haiti.

Heads of Government also agreed that the human rights situation of Dominicans of Haitian descent must form part of the Agenda of the CARIFORUM-EU policy or political dialogue.

## **REAPPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL**

Heads of Government agreed to the re-appointment of Ambassador Irwin LaRocque as Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community for a second five-year term to August 2021.

In the context of the ongoing reform process, Heads of Government agreed that there would be a limit of two terms for Secretaries-General of the Community.

## **AGREEMENTS SIGNED**

The Protocol Amending the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to Incorporate the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) as an Organ of the Community and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) as an Institution of the Community was opened for signature.

Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago signed the Protocol.

## **DATE OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH REGULAR MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF CARICOM**

The Thirty-Seventh Regular Meeting of the Conference will be held from 4-6 July 2016 under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Dominica the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit and will be co-hosted by the CARICOM Secretariat and the Government of Guyana.