

## Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat



### **COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), 1-4 JULY 2008, BOLANS, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

The Twenty-Ninth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held at Bolans, Antigua and Barbuda from 1-4 July 2008. The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Baldwin Spencer presided.

Other members of the Conference in attendance were: the Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. David J. H. Thompson; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; the President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo; the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Hon. Bruce Golding; 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; the 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. Rinaldo R. Venetiaan; and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning.

Hon. Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs represented The Bahamas, Hon. Wilfred Elrington Attorney-General and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade represented Belize, Hon. Clarisse Charles, Minister of Education, represented Grenada, Hon. Fritz Longchamps, Secretary-General of the Presidential Secretariat represented Haiti.

Associate Members in attendance were: the Chief Minister of Anguilla, Hon. Osbourne Fleming; the Leader of Government Business of the Cayman Islands, Hon. Kurt Tibbetts and the Chief Minister of Turks and Caicos Islands, Hon. Michael Misick. Bermuda was represented by the Hon. Terry E. Lister, Minister of Energy, Telecommunications and Commerce.

#### **OPENING CEREMONY**

The Chairman, the President of Guyana, the Prime Minister of Jamaica and the Secretary-General addressed the Opening Ceremony.

The Secretary-General drew attention to the fact that it was not far from the site of the Opening Ceremony that 43 years ago "three Caribbean Visionaries" signed the Dickenson Bay Agreement that set the Region on the road to Integration which led to the Community being able to celebrate its 35th Anniversary in 2008.

The Secretary-General said that both the external and internal challenges facing the Community were difficult "but times like these call for depth of vision and resolute commitment to the integration process drawing on the spirit of Dickenson Bay."

The Prime Minister of Jamaica said CARICOM was a Community of sovereign nations with a shared history, seeking to forge a common destiny while recognising that sovereign nations could synchronize their efforts for their common good and that in the harsh, fiercely competitive global environment, the challenges might be too much for each of us but not too much for the community as a whole.

The Prime Minister said the world was caught in the vortex of the worst global cyclone it has experienced in his lifetime. "In this time of crisis, strong leadership is critical. Leaders have the duty to seize the opportunity and

rise to the occasion, to go where others are unwilling to go, to grasp where others are unable to reach – if we are to pilot the way through the storm. That is the urgent demand that is made of us as leaders. CARICOM provides the framework. The Caribbean people await our response," he added.

The President of Guyana said that for the regional enterprise to succeed the goals of integration could not be continuously defined and redefined. "We have to balance the seeming obsession with architecture and framework and noble and lofty ideas, however important they are, with the need to work on practical initiatives - initiatives that create opportunities for our young people and entrepreneurs, initiatives that solve problems facing our people on a daily basis, initiatives that allow the Region to remain viable in the face of a changing world," he said.

The President identified what he considered to be three of the most pressing issues that had to be tackled as a Community - feeding the people, preparation of the people for a knowledge-based world and climate change and its consequences. "They represent systemic challenges but if tackled aggressively could yield significant positive dividends for our Region," he said.

The Chairman, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda said there was manifest need for deep introspection on the issue of re-engineering CARICOM and said one of the targeted outcomes of the meeting must be for the Community to move immediately to engage the Bureau of Heads of Government in the vital function of driving the implementation of key decisions between regular Meetings and Inter-Sessional Meetings.

The Chairman said an endemic communications gap existed that CARICOM needed to bridge very urgently. "We must, as a principal priority, elevate mass communications with the Caribbean people to the top of the CARICOM agenda," he added.

The Chairman said that at the completion of CARICOM's first thirty five years, there were many blessings. "CARICOM has delivered distinct benefits to the Caribbean people. If CARICOM did not exist we would have had to invent it," he stated.

## **AWARDS**

### **Order of the Caribbean Community (OCC)**

Four outstanding Caribbean citizens were invested with the Community's highest honour, the Order of the Caribbean Community.

They are: Professor Hon. Ralston (Rex) Nettleford, of Jamaica O.M; His Excellency Dr. Nicholas Joseph Orville Liverpool, DAH, of Dominica; Hon. George Lamming, CHB of Barbados; and Mr. Brian Charles Lara, T.C. of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **The CARICOM Triennial Award for Women**

Professor Barbara Bailey of Jamaica was invested with the CARICOM Triennial Award for Women. She became the ninth holder of the Award.

## **SIGNINGS**

The following Agreements and Treaty were signed by some Member States:

- Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS);
- Agreement Establishing Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA);
- Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Development Fund (CDF);
- Maritime and Airspace Security Co-operation Agreement; and
- CARICOM Arrest Warrant Treaty

## **CARICOM AT 35**

To mark the 35th Anniversary of the Caribbean Community, the Heads of Government attended a Ceremony at Dickenson Bay, site of the signing of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) Treaty in 1965.

Heads of Government also took the opportunity to reflect on the achievements of and contemplate the way forward for the Community. In that regard, the Heads of Government welcomed presentations from the Hon. Roderick Rainford, former Secretary-General of CARICOM and Sir George Alleyne, Chancellor of the University of the West Indies.

Heads of Government identified several achievements, challenges and responses and agreed that among the strategic directions for future sustainability included strengthening relations with traditional partners while cultivating new ones, strengthening governance arrangements in the Community while ensuring that variable geometry should be viewed as a positive aspect of the Region's development. Heads of Government renewed the Region's commitment to functional co-operation and strengthening the marketing mechanism of the Community through a concerted information, education and communication programme and identified meaningful engagement with the Diaspora as integral to achieving a Community for All.

The Secretary-General of CARICOM in endorsing the suggestions of the presenters thanked the past and present leaders of the Community, the many stakeholders and the staff of the CARICOM Secretariat for their invaluable contributions to the Community.

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, speaking on behalf of the Heads of Government, hailed the achievements of the Community. He referred in particular to the need to build on successes such as the legacy of Cricket World Cup 2007 in the area of security and paid tribute to the Secretary-General and Staff of the CARICOM Secretariat.

[The Dickenson Bay Declaration is annexed.](#)

## **TOURISM**

Heads of Government devoted the first business day to discussion with representatives from the Tourism, Hotel and Regional Airline Industries on the options for enhancing regional Tourism in the context of current international trends.

Heads of Government agreed on a strategy of a Regional Marketing Campaign including the adoption in principle, of a Caribbean Regional Brand and the creation of a Marketing Campaign Fund, as well as the establishment of timely and comprehensive information gathering systems which would adequately reflect the contribution of tourism to the national economies.

A Special Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) on Tourism will be convened to examine the related modalities and report to a meeting of the Bureau of Heads of Government within the next sixty days.

Related practical proposals on the role and challenges of Caribbean air carriers also engaged the attention of the Heads who reaffirmed their support for stronger collaboration and functional cooperation among the Regional Airlines, the establishment of Regional Hubs and a focus on emerging new markets.

## **REGIONAL AIR TRANSPORT**

The Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS) was established on the signing by the Governments of Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago of the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System, and designated an Institution of the Community by the Conference pursuant to Article 21 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

CASSOS succeeds the Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System (RASOS) with expanded functions. It formalises arrangements for: coordinating in a cost effective manner the sharing of the limited technical aviation expertise of the region; the harmonisation of training, licensing, certification and inspection procedures; and providing technical support to the participating States to enable them to achieve and maintain full compliance with international safety and security standards in keeping with their obligations as contracting States to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention, 1944).

The regional approach is consistent with the global strategy promoted by ICAO and the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to address safety and security oversight issues in contracting states and CARICOM joins other regions in establishing its own entity membership of which is open to non-CARICOM Caribbean States and territories.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT HEALTH AND AIDS**

### **Children's Issues**

Heads of Government considered issues related to child development and protection and endorsed a Revised Framework for addressing children's issues. The revised framework, which now takes into account the potential impact of climate change and actions to deal with children in emergencies, will serve as a framework for guiding and coordinating actions of Member States and development partners. The Heads of Government commended UNICEF and other development partners for their continuing support in addressing issues related to children in the Region. Heads also learnt of plans for the CARICOM Children's website to engage children in greater awareness of the integration process.

### **The Caribbean Public Health Agency**

Heads of Government underlined the importance of the process currently being undertaken for the establishment of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), intended to bring under a single governance structure, the Regional Health Institutions in order to provide comprehensive oversight for the management of the Community's public health programme. They urged stakeholders to participate actively in the national and regional consultative processes with regard to CARPHA in order to ensure effective linkages between the national and regional public health systems. Heads of Government extended appreciation to the Canadian Government, PAHO/WHO and the Advisory Group for their technical assistance in the development of the new agency.

### **Caribbean Wellness Day 2008 - Follow-up to the Summit on Non- Communicable Diseases**

The inaugural Caribbean Wellness Day, a direct result of the Port-of-Spain Declaration Summit in 2007, will be observed on 13 September 2008 with the full support of Heads of Government. The core activities to involve all Member States revolve around, **No tobacco, Less Salt, Less Fat, Daily Exercise and blood pressure checks**. The overall programme which is included in the 15 actionable recommendations of the Port of Spain Declaration: Unifying against NCDs, contains a number of activities aimed at reducing the incidence of hypertension, diabetes, heart failure and obesity. All Governments, the Private Sector, the labour movement and individuals are expected to participate in Caribbean Wellness Day and the Wellness Revolution.

Heads of Government also agreed to explore the issue of organ transplants and in particular, the capacity of the Region to provide necessary services.

### **HIV and AIDS**

Heads of Government noted the progress being made by PANCAP in the areas of coordinating the regional response to HIV and AIDS and endorsed the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS (2008-2012) funding for which is to be sought from a variety of sources including from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis and from Government contributions.

### **CARIFESTA**

Heads of Government commended Guyana for the plans laid out for hosting CARIFESTA X scheduled for 22-30 August, 2008 and agreed to promote the festival at the national level to raise interest and awareness among the general public.

### **The Caribbean Games**

The Conference applauded Trinidad and Tobago for agreeing to host the inaugural Caribbean Games organized by the Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committee (CANOC) and the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Association (TTOC) 13-19 July 2009. The Games are intended to attract the best athletes of the Region and will be held every four years. Cuba has been identified as host of the 2013 Caribbean Games.

## **CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)**

Heads of Government welcomed the offer of the Prime Minister of Barbados and Lead head of Government with responsibility for the CSME, to host a wide-ranging regional consultation on the CSME in the second half of 2008. The meeting will review the status of preparation of the Strategic Plan for Regional Development, Member States' readiness for the implementation of the Single Economy, as well as the role of stakeholders in the implementation of the various elements of the CSME.

### **Free Movement**

Heads of Government agreed that there should be a review of the implementation of the free movement of skilled Community nationals with a view to determining its reaffirmation or modification.

Heads of Government reiterated that the right to a six-month stay in Member States participating in the Single Market should not be limited to holders of CARICOM passports, but should also apply to CARICOM citizens of Member States which have not yet issued CARICOM passports. Heads of Government also welcomed Jamaica's introduction of the six-month stay.

Heads of Government welcomed the confirmation by Jamaica and information from Belize that they will introduce the CARICOM passport by the end of 2008.

### **Montserrat**

Heads of Government expressed their deep disappointment that the Government of the United Kingdom had denied the request of Montserrat for an Entrustment which would enable that Member State's participation in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. Heads of Government urged the Government of the United Kingdom to review its position on the Entrustment.

### **CARICOM Development Fund**

Heads of Government welcomed the launch of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF) with the requisite signatures for its provisional application.

They observed that the launch, with an initial sum of US \$60 million towards its target of US\$ 250 million, was an event of signal importance to the integration process given that the Fund was critical to achieving the objectives of equitable distribution of the benefits of the CSME.

Heads of Government commended all contributing states from both within and outside the Community for having made the CDF a reality.

They recalled that the Fund was intended to provide financial and technical assistance to Disadvantaged Countries, Regions and Sectors. They observed that their decision to add a more outwardly oriented and dynamic element to the mandate of the Fund had been captured by the inclusion of a Regional Development Division in the CDF and called on the international financial and donor community to provide tangible support to this new institution.

### **Services**

Heads of Government recognised that the Services Sector is the largest sector of the Regional Economy accounting for more than sixty-six (66) per cent of GDP and employment, and no less than seventy (70) per cent of export earnings.

To this end, they re-affirmed their support for the establishment of national services coalitions and called upon Member States to establish their services coalitions by 31 December 2008.

Heads of Government also supported the work to establish a harmonised regulatory framework for the provision of professional services which would establish the minimum qualifications and the registration and licensing requirements.

Additionally, they supported the proposal to convene a Regional Symposium on Services during the fourth quarter of 2008, the results of which would serve as contributing inputs into the Draft Strategic Plan for Regional Development.

## **FOOD SECURITY, ENERGY COSTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Heads of Government in reviewing the impact and regional response to global rising prices and the developments in energy and climate change and the implications for the Region's food and nutrition security, emphasized the need for governments to provide the necessary budgetary support and incentives for investment in agriculture, particularly at this time. In view of the importance of this issue on the respective development agendas, Heads of Government recommitted their full support to this sector.

Further, given the importance and the development implications of Climate Change, the Conference established a Task Force on Climate Change to give direction for the way forward.

## **CRIME AND SECURITY**

Heads of Government expressed continued concern over the escalating threats to the Region from crime, including trans-national crime, and its resulting violent criminal activity at the national level. The Conference received a briefing from the Lead Prime Minister with regard to the Status of Implementation of the decisions of the Nineteenth Inter-Sessional and the Thirteenth Special Meetings of the Conference of Heads of Government. They noted that considerable progress had been made in the implementation process.

Particular note was taken of the ongoing requirements for the further strengthening of the security mechanisms put in place for the CWC 2007, the full implementation of the CARICOM Justice Protection Programme and the urgent enactment of legislation in support of the regional security agenda.

With respect to deportation, Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the agreed CARICOM position on deportation in the Member States' respective bilateral negotiations with deporting countries.

Heads of Government approved the implementation in the shortest possible time, of the CARICOM Travel Card (CARIPASS), as a mechanism to facilitate hassle free travel within the Region for nationals and legal residents of CARICOM without compromising the security of the Community.

The Maritime and Airspace Security Cooperation Agreement and the CARICOM Arrest Warrant Treaty were available for signature and were signed by those Heads who had completed their internal processes. Other Member States are expected to sign shortly. Both these Agreements are considered vital in the fight against trans-national organized crime.

Heads of Government have agreed to the deepening of the co-operation between CARICOM and Interpol and authorised the Secretary-General to sign the Agreement on behalf of CARICOM.

## **BORDER ISSUES**

### **Belize/Guatemala**

Heads of Government were informed that the Confidence Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala, with the assistance of the Organisation of American States (OAS), still continue. They were pleased to learn that the illegal settlers at Santa Rosa have been removed from Belize and resettled in a humane way in their own country, Guatemala. This relocation project was made possible through the generous contributions of the Governments of Mexico, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Spain.

Heads of Government were informed that on the occasion of the 38th Regular Session of the OAS General Assembly held in Medellin, Colombia, the Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala met with the Secretary-General of the OAS, His Excellency José Miguel Insulza. Their discussions centred on preparations for the next steps to be taken by Belize and Guatemala, toward the implementation of the recommendation of the OAS Secretary-General for both countries to elevate the matter of the Territorial Differendum to the International Court of Justice.

The meeting highlighted the serious commitment of both countries to move forward expeditiously and in a

structured manner to start preparations for the holding of public consultations and referenda in both countries on the issue. Before the case can be taken to the International Court of Justice, a referendum must be held simultaneously in both countries; a bi-partisan political commitment in Belize and a constitutional requirement for Guatemala.

Heads of Government reiterated their full support for the maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize.

### **Guyana/Venezuela**

Heads of Government took note of the recent developments in Guyana/Venezuela relations and the efforts being made to resuscitate the United Nations Good Offices Process which is aimed at finding a solution to the controversy that arose from the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 is null and void.

They expressed the view that it was therefore critical for a new Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to be appointed as soon as possible in order to advance the Good Offices Process.

Heads of Government re-affirmed their unequivocal support for the safeguarding of Guyana's territorial integrity and sovereignty and its right to develop its resources in the entirety of its territory.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **The Hemisphere**

#### **New York Conference on the Caribbean**

Heads of Government mandated the Community Council to ensure appropriate follow-up by the respective Councils in relation to the issues of relevance to these Bodies raised at the 2008 New York Conference on the Caribbean. They also agreed to accept the offer of Congressman Charles Rangel to make use of his good offices and that of members of the Black Caucus to engage the US Congress and Administration to actively promote the interests of the Caribbean Community.

Heads of Government expressed deep appreciation to Congressman Rangel for facilitating the visit and for providing the opportunity for the engagement with the various parties.

Heads of Government also commended the New York Consular Corps for spearheading the arrangements for the visit and the Caucus of Ambassadors in Washington, regional officials and the CARICOM Secretariat for the support provided in this regard.

### **Canada**

Heads of Government noted developments in relation to preparations for CARICOM-Canada negotiations for a Trade and Development Agreement. They underlined the importance for Member States to undertake the necessary consultations with stakeholders.

Heads of Government viewed this as important in the light of the proposed Summit with the Prime Minister of Canada which would provide the political impetus for enhancing the Special Relationship between CARICOM and Canada.

### **Summit of The Americas**

Heads of Government noted with satisfaction, the arrangements being put in place by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to host the Fifth Summit of the Americas (V-SOA) in 2009 under the theme: *Securing our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability*.

Heads of Government received the presentation of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago on the preparations of that Government for this major event and agreed to support the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in ensuring the successful hosting of the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

Heads of Government requested the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to keep all the Organs and Bodies of the Community apprised of any issues and developments regarding the Summit.

## **TRADE**

### **CARIFORUM-EC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)**

Heads of Government reviewed the process towards signature of the CARIFORUM-EC Partnership Agreement, to which several of them expressed readiness to sign.

They also considered possible implications of some provisions of the Agreement particularly for the designated Less Developed Countries of CARICOM.

Heads of Government noted that national consultations would be held in Guyana before a decision is taken to sign the Agreement.

Heads of Government welcomed the confirmation of Barbados for the signing of the Agreement with 30 July or 30 August as possible dates for the event.

### **Bananas**

Heads of Government reviewed developments in relation to Bananas the discussions on rebinding of the European Union (EU) Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff on Bananas taking place between the EU and Latin American banana exporting countries under the good offices of the WTO Director-General. In this regard they issued the Statement attached.

### **Latin America**

Heads of Government accepted the offer of the Government of Jamaica to represent the Caribbean Community in the Rio Group for the period 2008-2011.

They reiterated the need and importance for Member States, in the context of the emergence of new development partners and the outreach efforts by Third Countries, to respect and honour the provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

### **Zimbabwe**

Heads of Government reviewed the situation in Zimbabwe and agreed to issue the following statement:

*The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has followed with great concern the general elections in Zimbabwe and the subsequent presidential runoff of 27 June. The first round of the electoral process was tarnished by grave irregularities and inordinate delays in the announcement of the results and allegations of manipulation of these results to force a runoff. The second round of the presidential elections was further marred by spiralling political violence, intimidation and harassment which led to the withdrawal of the opposition candidate, Mr. Tsvangirai.*

*The Caribbean Community condemns this unacceptable trampling of the democratic and electoral processes in Zimbabwe. Held in circumstances which made a free and fair ballot impossible, these elections were totally devoid of legitimacy as they did not reflect the will of the people of Zimbabwe.*

*While acknowledging the complexity and sensitivity of the situation in Zimbabwe, the Caribbean Community, steeped as it is in the democratic process, calls on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) to use their best efforts to find a negotiated outcome to this flawed election in order to avoid a further deepening of the social, economic and political crisis for the people of Zimbabwe and its harmful effect on neighbouring states.*

## **EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

Heads of Government welcomed the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cuba who made a presentation on the arrangements being put in place for the Fourth CARICOM- Cuba Summit which will take place in Santiago de Cuba on 8 December 2008. He also updated information on Cuba's co-operation programmes with CARICOM Member States. He also underlined Cuba's view on the new phase being attained by the integration process in the Hemisphere with the establishment of ALBA and of UNASUR. Heads of Government also welcomed the Secretary-General of the OAS and discussed ways in which CARICOM and the OAS could work together. The OAS Secretary-General indicated that his organization would continue to observe and report on the quality of elections in the region. Trade, economic growth, climate change and crime were seen as the most salient issues confronting the Community and on which both organizations could cooperate.

In this regard, he highlighted the forthcoming conference on crime and security scheduled to take place in Mexico in October of this year and which would incorporate the outcomes of the CARICOM Special Meeting of the Conference on Security.

Heads of Government further welcomed the new Secretary-General of the Commonwealth who presented them with his guiding perspectives for that organisation.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General highlighted the issues of globalizing the Commonwealth's services by sharing the Commonwealth's products with non-member states, leveraging the credibility of the Commonwealth Secretariat with international partners, investigating new processes for partnerships which would not be based on financial resources but built on other platforms and the importance of embracing diversity, "the intrinsic strength of the Commonwealth".

The Chairman of the Conference thanked the Secretary-General for his overview and indicated that CARICOM would provide its views on how the Commonwealth could further assist small states. Heads of Government also approved the Marlborough House Statement on the reform of international financial institutions.

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

Heads of Government appointed Mr. Henry Gill as Director-General of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM).

#### **MESSAGES**

Heads of Government noted with appreciation messages of congratulation on the 35th Anniversary of CARICOM which came from the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Premier of the Cabinet of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Director-General of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Heads of Government expressed sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda for the warm hospitality extended to them and the excellent arrangements put in place for the Meeting.

#### **VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The 20th Intersessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government will be held in Belize in the first quarter of 2009.

### **TWENTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) 1-4 JULY 2008, BOLANS, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA,**

#### **STATEMENT ON BANANAS**

Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, meeting in Antigua & Barbuda on July 2-4, 2008, examined matters affecting the level of preferential access to the European market - preferences that have been instrumental in raising thousands of small farmers out of poverty, enabled them to achieve commendable levels of social and environmental responsibility and which have facilitated the contribution of the banana industry to the development of the Member States concerned.

Heads of Government noted that, while the recently initialled Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) will shield the Region's preferential access to the EU market from further legal challenge in the WTO, developments in negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) threatened to reduce severely the European Union's MFN tariff on bananas, which is the instrument that enables the Region to continue exporting profitably to the European market.

It was observed that the group of MFN suppliers – who were granted quota-free access to the EU market in January 2006 and whose exports have increased by 10% since then - have continued to call for substantial reductions in the EU's tariff, the only effect of which would be to severely damage the interests of Caribbean producers. It was noted, in contrast, that, in 2007, banana exports by the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group to the EU declined by 9% and that almost every CARICOM exporter experienced declines in their exports for that year.

Heads of Government further noted that, once again, the Caribbean had found itself excluded from discussions between the EU and the MFN suppliers, the results of which could be devastating for its economic interests. Heads of Government also observed that, in the WTO Doha negotiations, the same group of countries, claiming to be interested in the liberalization of "tropical products", has as its main objective the elimination of the small share of the EU market available to banana producers in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

Heads of Government noted with appreciation, the Joint Statement emanating from a Meeting of Ministers of agriculture and representatives of Cameroon, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, France, Ghana, Greece, Cote d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Madagascar, Portugal, Spain and Suriname held in Paris on April 30, 2008, which upheld the importance of maintaining a stable banana market in the EU, catering in a balanced way to the interests of all those who participate in it.

They also reaffirmed the Resolution of the 87th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers held in Addis Ababa on June 8-13, 2008, which, among other things, rejected any proposal that would have the effect of drastically reducing the current applied tariff of Euro 176/tonne.

Heads of Government affirmed that, if the outcome of the WTO Doha Development Agenda negotiations are to be balanced, there must be suitable treatment for bananas and other products that are the subject of long-standing preferences and that if this were not to be the case, Caribbean countries would find it impossible to join in any consensus that may emerge in the current talks.

4 July 2008

#### **DECLARATION OF DICKENSON BAY**

**We**, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), meeting at Dickenson Bay, Antigua and Barbuda, on the occasion of the Twenty-Ninth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, and on the 35th Anniversary of the Community;

**Recalling** the historic signing, 43 years ago, of the Dickenson Bay Agreement that brought into existence the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) which evolved into the Caribbean Community;

**Acknowledging** the vision of unity of the Founding Fathers of the Caribbean Community;

**Being conscious** of the accomplishments of the Community over the past 35 years, including the launching of the Single Market and the commitment to the establishment of the Single Economy;

**Noting** that the regional integration process remains the only viable option for a Community of small developing states in the current global economic dispensation;

**Recognising** the need for strong leadership and resolute commitment to the integration process;

**Affirming** the continuing need to invest in the development of the human and other resources of the Community in the movement towards deeper integration, and to ensure that our citizens live in a peaceful and safe environment, that they enjoy an improved standard of living and quality of life, and that their rights are protected;

**Fully convinced** that communication with and the participation and involvement of the Peoples of the Community are critical to meeting the objectives of the Community;

**Acknowledging** the communication gap that exists across/within the Community and the need to elevate mass communication with the Caribbean people to the top of the Regional agenda;

**Declare:**

Our renewed commitment to regional integration;

Full support for the initiatives to advance the achievement of the objectives as set out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas;

That we will use all means possible to galvanise the People of the Community as active participants in the integration process and embrace the media and other stakeholders as partners to accomplish this objective;

Our full support for the streamlining of the procedures of the integration process including an enhanced role for the Bureau of Heads of Government in representing the Community, in fostering implementation of Community decisions; and further strengthening of the quasi cabinet;

Our support for a variable geometry of integration which would allow for variation in the pace of accession to the integration arrangements;

Our intention to strengthen national systems to advance implementation of Community decisions;

Our intention to give renewed attention to the elaboration of the best methods by which the above objectives may be realised.

4 July 2008

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