



**COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF  
GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY**

**4-6 JULY 2017, GRAND ANSE, GRENADA**

The Thirty-Eighth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held at Grand Anse, Grenada, on 4-6 July 2017. The Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, chaired the proceedings.

Other members of the Conference in attendance were Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Honourable Gaston Browne; Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Honourable Dr Hubert Minnis; Prime Minister of Barbados, Rt. Honourable Freundel Stuart; Prime Minister of Dominica, Dr. the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit; President of Guyana, His Excellency Brigadier (Ret'd) David Granger; President of Haiti, His Excellency Jovenel Moïse; Prime Minister of Jamaica, Honourable Andrew Holness; Premier of Montserrat, Honourable Donaldson Romeo; Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, Dr. the Honourable Timothy Harris; Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Honourable Allen Chastanet; Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves; and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley.

Belize was represented by Honourable Wilfred Elrington, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Suriname was represented by Honourable Yldiz Pollack-Beighle, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Associate Members in attendance were the Hon. Dr. D. Orlando Smith, Premier of the British Virgin Islands; Hon. Sharlene Cartwright-Robinson, Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Cayman Islands was represented by Hon. Julianna O'Connor-Connolly, Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands.

## **OPENING CEREMONY**

The Opening Ceremony was addressed by Secretary-General, Ambassador Irwin LaRocque; Immediate Past Chair of Conference, the President of Guyana, His Excellency Brigadier (Ret'd) David Granger; the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, the Honourable Dr. Hubert Minnis, the President of Haiti, His Excellency Jovenel Moïse and Chairman of Conference, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell.

Secretary-General LaRocque noted that in the history of the integration movement, Grand Anse was the birthplace of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in 1989 as a response to the “challenges and opportunities presented by the changes in the global economy at that time.”

He noted there were distinct parallels with the situation today which was exacerbated by the devastating impact of climate change and its attendant “series of increased and more severe climatic events.”

The Secretary-General indicated that the meeting would have a significant focus on economic issues.

Ambassador La Rocque referred to the challenges facing the Community which could be overcome by “the collective ingenuity and creativity of the people of the Caribbean Community.”

Prime Minister Minnis said that “our people need us to act together to harness the tremendous mutual potential of the Region, while facing shared challenges.” Given the resources of the sun, the wind, the oceans, rivers and lakes, the Prime Minister said that the Community should be diligent in putting into action plans for renewable energy, and energy efficiency.

The Prime Minister noted the Caribbean was the most tourism-dependent region in the world and that, “we must become more focused on finding ways to extract much more value from that area of our economies.” He further stated that it was time to create marketing and product improvement programmes based on facts instead of opinions.

Prime Minister Minnis observed “we will become individually more successful when we become collectively more successful. Our people will know CARICOM is working for them when they can see, hear, taste and feel it for themselves.”

President Moïse assured that his administration was going to accelerate the implementation of the components of the CSME so that Haiti could fully participate in the regional integration process. "Haiti, with its economic potential, once freed from certain obstacles, will be a reliable and consistent partner for the other 14 CARICOM Member States," he added. His Excellency stated the "new" Haiti was counting on the support of CARICOM.

President Moïse outlined the initiatives his administration had undertaken to improve the economic circumstances of Haiti. "The name of Haiti has often been referred to as a country suffering from the dire consequences of natural disasters and climate change. I have committed myself to convert our challenges into opportunities," he declared.

"Henceforth and forever more, my country wishes to stop being perceived as a humanitarian destination. It wishes to retake its destiny into its own hands to be worthy of the efforts of the founding fathers, forgers of civilization. Haiti wants to renew with its status of a Caribbean country, a country that celebrates life, the country of hope, a destination for investments," President Moïse said.

President Granger observed the Treaty of Chaguaramas allowed the pursuit of vital interests at the levels of the citizen, the country and the Community. He said the deliberations at the meeting, the decisions to be made and the actions to implement them therefore would advance interests at all three levels.

He said the Community found itself in an international environment today that was replete with uncertainty and complexity and had vital interests to protect and promote in its international relations.

The President noted that the environment was an inescapable economic reality. He said the Community possessed unmatched natural assets which were the basis of the tourism industry. "Adopting a "green" agenda can help to protect the Community from the threat of environmental hazard and natural disaster and safeguard people's livelihoods and the industries on which they rely," he added.

President Granger reminded the CSME was the most ambitious project attempted by the Community and given the present uncertainties facing the Region's international relations, its implementation must be accelerated in order to create a single economic space.

Chairman of Conference, Prime Minister Mitchell, questioned whether the Community was sufficiently demonstrating active engagement in resolving the Region's challenges collectively.

“We must, therefore, seize the opportunity of this 38th Meeting of the Conference, to summon both the spirit of the Grand Anse Declaration and the collective experiences of the last Twenty - Eight years, in recalibrating our approach to the environment in which CARICOM must continue to pursue the ideals of the CSME,” Prime Minister Mitchell said.

He said deepening partnerships through the CSME required that “we urgently dispel with the “knee jerk” nationalistic response in exchange for higher Community ideals in some key areas.” Prime Minister Mitchell urged the closing of the political distance with “our regional constituents” at all levels of society, particularly youth.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the work plan for the Single ICT Space was an important item on the agenda. “Placed in proper context, the Single ICT Space will be critical to our attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, and for the Region’s Digital Agenda 2025,” he said.

Prime Minister Mitchell called for greater use of statistics to form the basis of evidence-based decision-making in CARICOM.

He said his Chairmanship of the Small States Forum must be used to harness development possibilities by addressing the issues of Small States’ access to finance and technology, and advancement of the “Blue Economy.”

## **AWARDS**

Ms. Shirley Pryce of Jamaica was bestowed with the CARICOM Triennial Award for Women for her advocacy for women’s rights and trade unionism and in particular the rights of domestic workers at the national, regional and international levels as exemplified in ILO Domestic Workers Convention 189 of 2011.

## **SIGNINGS**

The Conference adopted and opened for signature the Agreement establishing the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) and the CARICOM Arrest Warrant Treaty. The following Member States signed:

**CARICOM Arrest Warrant Treaty (CAWT)**

Dominica  
Grenada  
Guyana  
St. Kitts and Nevis  
Saint Lucia

**Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE)**

Barbados  
Belize  
Dominica  
Grenada  
Guyana  
Jamaica  
St Kitts and Nevis  
Saint Lucia  
St Vincent and the Grenadines  
Suriname

**OTHER INSTRUMENTS SIGNED**

Belize also signed the Protocol amending the CARICOM Social Security Agreement and the Amendment to Annex III of the Agreement relating to the Operation of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF).

St. Kitts and Nevis and Suriname 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.

## **REGIONAL SECURITY**

In the area of Crime and Security, the Heads of Government discussed key initiatives directed towards combatting transnational organized crime which continued to be the most immediate and significant threat facing the Region.

Focus was also directed towards the development of a CARICOM Counter Terrorism Strategy which is being finalised for adoption by the Heads of Government.

Heads of Government also deliberated on the implementation of border security and management projects and programmes, including the current expansion of the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) and the establishment of an Advance Cargo Information System (ACIS) which will enhance the safety and security of the peoples of the Region.

Heads of Government also discussed other legal instruments that would be required to facilitate the co-ordination of the fight against crime including advancing the work on the CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Security Co-operation Agreement.

## **STATUS OF THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)**

Heads of Government, having considered the outstanding issues related to the implementation and operations of the Single Market and Economy, identified the critical issues and acknowledged the need to accelerate the use of the measures under the CSME.

In that regard, they approved the Implementation Plan for the CSME 2017-2019 which coincided with the CARICOM Strategic Plan (2015-2019) and agreed that the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP), as a critical Organ in advancing the CSME, must be more active. Heads of Government mandated that COFAP's next meeting be held in October, 2017 and thereafter, prior to the annual regular meeting of the Conference.

## **COMMISSION ON THE ECONOMY**

Heads of Government acknowledged the consistent lag in growth performance between CARICOM States and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS). They also acknowledged as well the prevailing implementation challenges and implementation deficit, which are critical constraints on sustainable growth and development in the Community.

In that regard, Heads of Government welcomed the collaboration between the Commission and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to advance proposals on the delivery unit mechanism to promote key reforms to improve productivity and competitiveness towards accelerating growth and sustainable development in Member States.

## **CARICOM HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT 2030 STRATEGY**

Heads of Government received and endorsed the Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy and commended the HRD Commission on its work in developing the HRD Strategy as mandated by the Conference in February 2014.

They recognized and expressed appreciation for the critical role played by the CDB in providing financial and technical assistance for the development of the Strategy. In accepting the recommendations of the Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan, Heads of Government noted the value of the comprehensive document in guiding both regional and national action on Human Resource Development.

In particular, the Strategy outlines actions for basic education, from Early Childhood through Secondary, the tertiary sector and life-long learning in enabling CARICOM Citizens to reach their full potential in their personal and working lives, thereby contributing to their families, communities and national and regional development.

Heads of Government acknowledged that there had been significant progress with regard to access to primary and secondary education, with universal access to primary education and near universal access at the secondary level in almost all our Member States. They however recognized the imperative for a radically reformed system to address the requirements of 21st Century Economy and Society.

Heads of Government committed to working together to address the specific actions outlined in the Strategy to develop specific skills and competencies required for construction of a globally competitive, innovative, and seamlessly integrated education system necessary to drive inclusive sustainable development in the Region. In this regard, they agreed to share best practices and experiences with the other Member States.

Heads of Government acknowledged the value of the Strategy in supporting and guiding the critical transformations required to align HRD sectors throughout the Region with the expectations, needs, and imperatives of development for the 21st Century.

## **NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Heads of Government noted that this year was the Tenth Anniversary of the seminal CARICOM Heads of Government NCD Summit and Declaration “Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)”.

They recognised that the Community had not sufficiently advanced the recommended actions with regard to the Declaration and in that regard recommitted themselves to the promotion of healthy lifestyles to combat the epidemic of NCDs.

Heads of Government supported the use of inter-sectoral approaches to address current health challenges.

They noted with concern that obesity in children represented the greatest threat to the health of future generations with the level of overweight and obesity being more than 30 % in both primary and secondary school populations in many Member States.

Heads of Government also supported the strengthening of domestic food production along with the promotion and consumption of nutritious indigenous foods.

Heads of Government urged the promotion of Physical Exercise in school-age children and an acceleration of the Public Education Programme on Healthy lifestyles.

Heads of Government received a message from Mr Michael Bloomberg ensuring his support and welcomed the interest expressed by the Bloomberg Foundation in NCD Prevention in the Region.

## **TOURISM IN THE REGION**

Heads of Government welcomed a presentation on the Region’s Tourism Sector by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) and noted that the initiatives put forward were fully aligned with the tenets of the CARICOM Strategic Plan and are also in furtherance of the Strategic Plan for Tourism Services.

Heads of Government recognised the opportunities presented by the recommended strategies, including a focus on marketing strategies, to address both immediate and long-term initiatives

aimed at stimulating sustainable growth in tourism and, among other things, agreed to support various Public-Private Sector initiatives.

Heads of Government agreed to broaden engagement with Caribbean countries, companies and multilateral organizations to support a regional tourism marketing and development initiative, as well as to adopt and implement travel facilitation measures to stimulate economic growth.

The Prime Minister of Jamaica encouraged Member States to participate in the United Nations World Tourism Organisation Global Conference on Tourism Development and Sustainability to be held in Jamaica from 27-29 November 2017.

## **AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Heads of Government reached agreement on key air transportation issues recognising that Member States' effective implementation of the new international aviation Standards and Recommended Practices of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) for safety and airport security was fundamental to engendering confidence.

Heads of Government noted that such confidence was not only necessary among Member States to implement many of the measures to facilitate ease of travel in the Region but also for third countries so that they continue to highlight our airports as acceptable destination points for tourists and for the movement of people and goods.

To this end, Heads of Government welcomed the support of the ICAO, for their No Country Left Behind Initiative to assist Member States in implementation and for their commitment to provide resources for other regional air transportation initiatives.

They mandated the Government-owned Airlines to continue to increase their efforts towards enhancing their level of collaboration and coordination for the benefit of the travelling public and urged that their plan of action and roadmap be finalised by February 2018.

Heads of Government agreed that the establishment of a Single Airspace should be pursued and mandated the Secretariat to work with Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS) and relevant agencies to define a roadmap and identify the necessary resources for its implementation. They however recognised the need for the administrative strengthening of the legal, operational and institutional framework as well as the appropriate

resourcing of the CASSOS to enable it to discharge its mandate as an effective and efficient Regional Safety Oversight Organisation.

In endorsing the priorities in the Work Programme of the Regional Transportation Commission, Heads of Government acknowledged that the major constraint to the execution of the work of the Commission was the lack of budgetary resources.

Heads of Government, recognising that the new Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA) only required resolution of very few matters, mandated the Secretariat to work with Member States to enable signature at the next Inter-Sessional Meeting in February 2018.

Heads of Government agreed to a number of measures complementary to the MASA as recommended by the Commission on the Economy:

- addressing the issue of the multi-layered regime of aviation taxes;
- the operationalization of the Community of Interest Principle to guide liberalized Air Services Agreements between Member States and Third States;
- the joint negotiation of future Air Services Agreements with potential targets identified as China, Japan, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, and the United Arab Emirates.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (ICT4D)**

### **Single ICT Space**

Heads of Government remain convinced that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) stands to play a transformative role in fostering an integrated and inclusive digitally-enabled Caribbean Community.

In that regard, they viewed the successful development of the Single ICT Space as a new dimension for CARICOM with regard to addressing and inspiring the growing aspirations of citizens and defining the CARICOM Digital Agenda 2025 and beyond.

Heads of Government therefore welcomed and approved the Draft Workplan for the Single ICT Space, and reiterated that the Single ICT Space is a regional priority. The implementation of the workplan would provide an enabling environment for innovation to flourish; a larger market

for investors; support sustainable increase in growth and jobs; enhance efficiency and increase access to higher value public services.

Heads of Government also noted the synergies between the Single ICT Space and other major regional initiatives and sectors such as the Regional Strategic Plan, the Commission on the Economy, the HRD Strategy 2030, Security, Transport and Tourism.

Heads of Government requested the CARICOM Secretariat to engage development partners with urgency, for sourcing funds for the environmental assessment to determine the state of the ICT sector.

### **CARICOM SMALL STATES – OPPORTUNITIES FOR FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Heads of Government welcomed the fact that the Prime Minister of Grenada was now the Chairman of the World Bank Small States Forum. They observed that this presented a further opportunity for the Community to address the issues relating to greater access to public and private sector financing, including through proposals for innovative modalities, instruments and technologies.

Heads of Government endorsed the call by the Honourable Prime Minister of Grenada for special attention to the blue economy, renewable energy and technology within the context of the CARICOM platform during the Small States Forum;

In this regard, Heads of Government requested the preparation of a comprehensive strategic paper on issues pertinent to Small States Development Financing including a prospectus of transformative projects that could access available resources under various initiatives such as the Green Climate Fund.

Heads of Government agreed that Information and Communication Technology and Statistics were areas which would be among the priorities for funding as they were critical in the thrust to growth and development.

### **REPARATIONS FOR NATIVE GENOCIDE AND SLAVERY**

Heads of Government received a status report on the work of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC).

Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing Reparations for social justice, to restore the dignity of the victims and their descendants, and to seek redress for the crimes committed against humanity of native genocide and slavery.

They noted responses to the letters sent by the Chairman of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Reparations to European leaders.

Heads of Government mandated the CRC, in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, to coordinate the preparation of a strategy that includes diplomatic, media and messaging to advance the Reparations claim, and to redouble efforts at public education.

Heads of Government agreed to strengthen national programmes of activities to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent, including public engagement on Reparations.

## **REGIONAL PLAN FOR STATISTICS DEVELOPMENT**

Heads of Government reiterated their commitment to the Regional Plan for Statistics Development in light of the growing demand for data on social, economic and environmental indicators and endorsed a strategy to guide good practices in regional statistical co-operation. Heads of Government emphasised the importance of accurate data in order to monitor and implement effective national and regional policies, particularly in relation to the CSME and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **BORDER ISSUES:**

### **Belize-Guatemala Relations**

Heads of Government received an update on the most recent developments between Belize and Guatemala.

Heads of Government recalled that both Belize and Guatemala have now completed their internal procedures required for the Special Agreement to Submit Guatemala's Claim to the International Court of Justice of 2008, including its related Protocol of 2015, to enable these Agreements to come into force and that the two countries have exchanged notes in this respect.

They expressed their hope that both countries can proceed with the required referendum as early as possible.

Heads of Government noted, with regret, that the undertaking by both countries and the Organisation of American States (OAS), to engage in the design and development of a mechanism of co-operation for the Sarstoon River, remains outstanding and urged both countries and the OAS to redouble their efforts in this respect.

Heads of Government expressed support for the continuous and critical role of the OAS in the process aimed at resolving the dispute arising from Guatemala's claims on Belize and further called on the international community to continue supporting the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone.

Heads of Government emphasized their unflinching support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Belize.

### **Guyana-Venezuela Relations**

Heads of Government received an update from the President of Guyana on recent developments on the controversy between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the efforts of United Nations Secretary General, H.E. Antonio Guterres, to find a final and binding solution.

Heads of Government welcomed the appointment of His Excellency Dag Nylander as Personal Representative of the UN Secretary General in the Good Offices Process for the duration of 2017, with a strengthened mandate of mediation. They noted that "if by the end of 2017, the Secretary-General concludes that significant progress has not been made toward arriving at a full agreement for the solution of the controversy, he will choose the International Court of Justice as the next means of settlement," unless the Governments of Guyana and Venezuela "jointly request that he refrain from doing so". They recognised the strong commitment of the Secretary-General to the process and joined Guyana in acknowledging his efforts.

Heads of Government reiterated the firm and unequivocal support of the Caribbean Community for the maintenance and preservation of Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

### **FUTURE TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM (UK), POST BREXIT**

Heads of Government considered the latest developments with respect to the withdrawal process of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

Heads of Government welcomed assurances from the United Kingdom that it would seek to achieve continuity in its trade relationships post Brexit, including those covered by existing EU free trade agreements with Third Countries such as the CARIFORUM-EU Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Heads of Government also welcomed the United Kingdom's willingness to engage the Region and recognised that the Region must move urgently to forge an agreement that would guarantee that there would be no interruption in preferential CARICOM/UK trade once BREXIT takes place.

Heads of Government further recognised the need to strengthen the development co-operation relationship with the United Kingdom and agreed that the Community should, as soon as possible, also engage with the UK with a view towards achieving that objective.

#### **ACP-EU RELATIONS**

Heads of Government received an update on the Region's preparations for the ACP-EU negotiations for a successor arrangement to the Cotonou partnership agreement which expires in 2020. They stressed the importance of adequate and timely preparation for the negotiation of this Successor Agreement.

In that regard, Heads of Government mandated the Secretariat to convene meetings of CARIFORUM Experts, researchers, technicians and relevant stakeholders to ensure exhaustive consideration of the issues relating to the negotiations.

Heads of Government reiterated that any new agreement should maintain the core geographic and geopolitical character of the ACP Group and that CARICOM would remain actively engaged in the discussions within the CARIFORUM-ACP and ACP-EU constructs to ensure a positive development-oriented outcome for the Region.

#### **THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA**

Heads of Government considered the situation in Venezuela and issued a statement which is attached to this communique.

## **APPRECIATION**

Heads of Government thanked the Government and People of Grenada for the excellent arrangements and hospitality which were provided for the successful conduct of the Meeting.

## **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

Haiti will be the venue for the Twenty-Ninth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference in the month of February 2018.

## **STATEMENT ON VENEZUELA**

CARICOM Heads of Government, meeting in Conference in Grenada on 4-6 July 2017, discussed the serious challenges facing Venezuela and its people. They reaffirmed their guiding principles of adherence to the rule of law, respect for human rights and democracy, as well as for the fundamental principles of non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

Concerned with the difficult political, economic and social situation in Venezuela, in particular the increase in violence and polarization between the Government and the Opposition, and its effect on the people of Venezuela, and recognizing the urgent need to find a solution to the present situation, and that this had to be sought internally, CARICOM Heads of Government called for all parties to commit to engage in renewed dialogue and negotiation leading to a comprehensive political agreement with established time tables, concrete actions and guarantees to ensure its implementation for the well-being of the nation. In this regard, CARICOM Heads of Government offered their good offices to facilitate this dialogue.

CARICOM Heads of Government mandated the Chairman of Conference to communicate with the parties concerned in Venezuela about this offer.