

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWENTIETH INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), 12-13 MARCH 2009, BELIZE CITY, BELIZE¹

14 de marzo, 2009

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana) The Twentieth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held in Belize City, Belize, from 12-13 March 2008. The Honourable Dean O. Barrow, Prime Minister of Belize, presided.

Other members of the Conference in attendance were: the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, the Rt. Hon Hubert Ingraham; the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable David J. H. Thompson; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit; the Prime Minister of Grenada, the Honourable Tillman Thomas; the President of the Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo; the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Honourable Bruce Golding; the Prime Minister of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, the Honourable Dr. Denzil L. Douglas; the President of Suriname, His Excellency Drs Runaldo R. Venetiaan; and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Patrick Manning. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. the Honourable Alrich Nicholas, represented the Republic of Haiti; the Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Investment, the Honourable Rufus Bousquet, represented Saint Lucia; and the Minister of National Mobilisation, the Honourable Michael Browne, represented St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Associate Members in attendance were the Honourable Osbourne Fleming, the Chief Minister of Anguilla, and the Honourable Dr Ewart Brown, Premier of Bermuda.

OPENING SESSION

The Opening Session was addressed by the Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, the Honourable Dean Barrow, Prime Minister of Belize, and the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, His Excellency Edwin W. Carrington.

In his statement, the Chairman of Conference posited that at the heart of the Meeting's deliberations must be a reminder of what integration was designed to achieve.

Announcing his intention to propose a constitutional amendment to allow Belize to sign on to the appellate jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice, the Chairman said the fact that only two countries of the Community had signed on to the appellate jurisdiction of the CCJ contributed to the "cynicism about the seriousness of our commitment to Caribbean identity." The Chairman cited instances of the progress of the integration movement and said that while there could be some measure of satisfaction, too much remained to be done.

¹ Tomado de www.caricom.org

“The philosophical and practical difficulties loom large; and the trick now is to consolidate the gains of the Single Market while picking our way carefully forward to the establishment of the Single Economy,” he said.

In his statement, the Secretary-General emphasised the importance of regional responses to international developments that were a cause for concern. “If anything this period in global history has underscored for us in this Region is the absolute urgency for this Community to have the capacity to act and indeed to so act as one entity in such instances,” he said.

SIGNINGS

Member States signed a number of legal instruments at this Meeting. The list is appended to this Communiqué.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS

Heads of Government deliberated on the global financial and economic crisis and its impact on the Community and agreed to pursue a regional strategy based on recommendations of the Task Force established by the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP). The Task Force will produce a report with both a short and medium term perspective on the policy implications of the crisis.

Heads also issued a statement on the regional perspective on the crisis which is attached to this Communiqué.

CSME

Heads of Government reiterated their commitment to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and its implementation and effective functioning paying particular attention to free movement of persons, accreditation and standardisation mechanisms.

They also emphasised that the CSME was a critical platform for meeting the challenges resulting from the current global financial and economic crisis and for CARICOM’s successful insertion into the world economy.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Heads of Government committed their countries to play a more active and visible role in the negotiation process in the build-up to the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009. They placed emphasis on the linkages between climate change and renewable energy and endorsed the position proposed by Guyana on promoting the Preservation of Forests and on Carbon Credit for the Region. In this regard, they emphasised the importance of significant reductions in emissions and the need for adequate resources to assist the most vulnerable developing countries, particularly CARICOM Member states.

Heads of Government welcomed the pivotal role of the Community in the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) chaired by Grenada. In that regard, they agreed on the need for Member States to make full use of this strategic positioning to ensure that the Community's priorities are part of the agreed global policy on Climate Change which emerges from Copenhagen.

Heads of Government welcomed the role played by the governments of the United Kingdom, through DFID and Italy as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in supporting the work of the CARICOM Task Force on Climate Change and Development and of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC).

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Heads of Government agreed that, even as the Region focused on the current financial problems, it would continue to direct attention to the transformation of regional agriculture and to food security. They also agreed that agriculture would be a focus of more detailed discussion at their next meeting to be held in July 2009 in Guyana.

Heads of Government received and supported a proposal from the Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for the convening of a World Summit on Food Security on 14-16 November 2009.

Heads of Government noted that the presentation by the Director-General emphasised the negative impact of the spiraling World food prices and of hunger, which among other things, led in 2008 to riots in 22 countries and grave food crises in 32 countries which currently require emergency assistance.

Heads of Government also noted that the objectives of the Summit would be to establish policies to eradicate hunger, to develop a more coherent and efficient system of governance with regard to World Food Security, to provide specific support for farmers in both developed and developing countries, to mobilise resources, and to adopt an early warning mechanism to avert future world food crises.

Heads of Government undertook to elicit support for and full participation in the Summit, from the countries participating in the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Heads of Government received a presentation on Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) from the Prime Minister of Grenada, the lead Head of Government with responsibility for Science and Technology.

Heads of Government accepted the need for Member States to re-examine the management and coordination of the various components of ICT4D at the national level and in this regard, agreed to establish national committees to guide and inform these reviews.

Heads of Government also agreed that their governments would support the convening of a meeting of Ministers responsible for ICT in May 2009, at which the draft Regional ICT Policy and Action Plan will be presented for consideration.

YOUTH COMMISSION

Heads of Government received a status report on the work of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (CCYD). They noted the progress made toward the implementation of its objectives as they had mandated and looked forward to the presentation of its final report at their Regular Meeting in July 2009.

They expressed their pleasure at the involvement of youth across the Region in a series of discussions and focus group meetings that generated invaluable information and insights into their perceptions, concerns and aspirations.

Heads of Government called for the fullest support of the CCYD by Member States and other stakeholders in the implementation of its work plan which would ensure a timely delivery of its Report and supported the recommendation for a special engagement of youth with Heads of Government.

CRIME AND SECURITY

Heads of Government received a report on developments with respect to the Crime and Security Agenda which included the implementation of the CARICOM Travel Card (CARIPASS), progress on the implementation of the ballistic information network, reactivation of the Regional Justice Protection Programme and co-operation between CARICOM and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Heads of Government supported a recommendation for the re-establishment of the UNODC office in CARICOM and for the holding of a regional conference on Crime and Security in May 2009.

JUSTICE AND GOVERNANCE

Heads of Government welcomed the notification of Belize and Dominica that they would seek to introduce the necessary legislative instruments to give effect to the appellate jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

EXTERNAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

Heads of Government in reaffirming the mandate given to the Secretary-General to coordinate EPA implementation among Member States endorsed the establishment of the Unit to promote EPA Implementation and confirmed that the assistance of the Unit is available to all Caribbean Forum of African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States (CARIFORUM) signatory to the EPA.

Heads of Government exchanged views with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, who represented his President, on issues relating to the implementation of the EPA and on his country's relations with the Caribbean Community.

Heads of Government agreed that discussions with the Dominican Republic should be continued with a view to arriving at a consensus on the designation of the CARIFORUM Co-ordinator under the EPA.

CARICOM-Canada Trade and Development Agreement

Heads of Government reaffirmed the Community's commitment to the early commencement of negotiations for a Trade and Development Agreement with Canada. In that regard, they approved the CARICOM Negotiating Brief to be used as the basis for the commencement of negotiations of the Agreement with the understanding that the recommendations constitute initial negotiating mandates which CARICOM may have to re-examine in the context of the continuing global financial and economic situation.

Heads of Government accepted the proposal for a meeting with the Canadian Prime Minister in the margins of the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Heads of Government received a presentation from the host country, Trinidad and Tobago, on the plans for staging the Fifth Summit of the Americas to be held on 17-19 April 2009. They noted that this event was being hosted on behalf of the Community. They committed to attend and to participate fully in the Summit and to help in ensuring that the event was a major success.

Heads of Government welcomed the prominent role that had been accorded to the Community and the extensive consultations on the agenda, and involvement in the preparations for the Summit.

BORDER ISSUES

Guyana-Venezuela

Heads of Government received an update on the relations between Guyana and Venezuela and in particular the efforts between the two sides to identify a new Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to advance the Good Offices Process. They underscored the need for that post to be filled at the earliest possible time.

Heads of Government reaffirmed 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.

Belize-Guatemala

Heads of Government received a report on the status of relations between Belize and Guatemala. They expressed their satisfaction on the successful negotiation and signing of the Special Agreement by both Governments to refer the territorial dispute to the International Court of Justice for final settlement, subject to the approval of their citizens in national referenda.

In this context, Heads of Government called on the international community, particularly the “Group of Friends” to support and assist the process both politically and financially.

Heads of Government emphasised the need to continue funding the operations of the Office of the Organisation of American States located on the Adjacency Zone that has successfully supported the efforts of both governments in maintaining peace and security and in reducing tensions along the border communities in both countries.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belize.

APPRECIATION

Heads of Government expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of Belize for the generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements put in place for the Meeting.

DATE AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

Heads of Government agreed that the Thirtieth Regular Meeting of the Conference will be held in Guyana on 2-5 July, 2009.

LEGAL INSTRUMENTS SIGNED AT THE TWENTIETH INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) 12-13 MARCH 2009, BELIZE CITY, BELIZE

Protocol Amending the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to incorporate the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement as an Organ of the Community and the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security as an Institution of the Community (Opened for signature On 13 March 2009)

Grenada

Jamaica

St Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Trinidad and Tobago

CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Security Cooperation Agreement

St Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

(Opened for signature in July 2008 and previously signed by Antigua and Barbuda, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago)

CARICOM Arrest Warrant Treaty

St Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

(Opened for signature in July 2008 and previously signed by Antigua and Barbuda, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago)

Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency

Belize (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Grenada

Haiti

St Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Suriname

Trinidad and Tobago

(Opened for signature in July 2008 and previously signed by Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines)

Agreement Relating to the Operation of the CARICOM Development Fund

Saint Lucia (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Grenada

St Kitts and Nevis

(Opened for signature in July 2008 and previously signed by, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago)