

**Press release 151/2005**

(7 July 2005 )

**COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), 3-6 JULY 2005, GROS ISLET, SAINT LUCIA**

The Twenty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community was held in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, from 3 to 6 July 2005. Dr. the Honourable Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia and Chairman of CARICOM, presided over the Meeting of the Conference.

Other Heads of Government of Member States in attendance were: The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Baldwin Spencer; the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Hon. Keith Mitchell; the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo; the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. P.J. Patterson; the Chief Minister of Montserrat, Dr. the Hon. John Osborne; the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis; Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas; the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves; the President of Suriname, His Excellency Drs. Runaldo R. Venetiaan and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning.

Hon. Fred Mitchell, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Public Service represented the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, and Hon. John Briceno, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment represented the Prime Minister of Belize.

Heads of Associate Members in attendance were: Premier of Bermuda, Hon. W. Alexander Scott, JP; Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands, Dr. the Hon. D. Orlando Smith; and Leader of Government Business, Cayman Islands, Hon. Kurt Tibbetts.

The Turks and Caicos Islands were represented by Honourable Jeffrey C. Hall, Minister of Housing, Immigration and Labour.

### **Opening Ceremony**

In the opening ceremony held on Sunday, 3 July, the tone for the Twenty-Sixth Meeting was set with statements by: Secretary-General of CARICOM, H.E. Mr. Edwin Carrington; President of Suriname and Outgoing Chairman of the Conference, H.E. Drs. Runaldo R. Venetiaan; recently elected Head of Government, Prime Minister of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; Incoming Chairman of the Conference, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning; and the Chairman of the Conference, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr. the Hon. Kenny D. Anthony.

## **Presentation of Awards**

The Hon. Madam Justice Desiree Bernard, O.R., C.C.H., J.C.C.J was the recipient of the Eighth Triennial Award for Women. Justice Bernard received the award in recognition of her contribution in the field of women and development, with particular reference to the empowerment of women and social justice.

Presentations were made at the Opening Ceremony to the winners of the Inaugural CARICOM 10K Race which was held on Sunday, 3 July 2005 in Saint Lucia. Eight Member States participated in the race. Samia Akbar and Pominus Balantyne, both of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, were the senior female and male winners respectively; while Shonell Griffin and Hiley Fulgence, both of Saint Lucia, were the junior female and male winners respectively. The 10K race will be an annual event which will be held in the host country of the Regular Session of the Conference.

## **Exchange of Views**

Heads of Government engaged in an exchange of views with a number of special guests: Dr. Rafael Alburqueque, Vice-President of the Dominican Republic, who delivered a message on behalf of the President of the Dominican Republic; His Excellency Enrique Iglesias, outgoing President of the Inter-American Development Bank, and Envoy of the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Winston Cox, Deputy Secretary-General.

## **Meeting between Heads of Government and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition**

Heads of Government welcomed the opportunity to exchange views with the Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition on the eve of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Conference on issues related to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). Heads of Government expressed satisfaction with the agreement to establish a Committee of Heads of Government and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition to discuss ways of involving Parliamentary Opposition more closely in Community affairs.

This Committee will comprise:

- For the Parliamentary Opposition: Hon. Edison James, Dominica; Hon. Robert Corbin, Guyana; and Hon. Bruce Golding, Jamaica.
- For the Heads of Government: Dr. the Hon. Kenny D. Anthony, Saint Lucia, Lead Head of Government for Justice and Governance; the Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur, Barbados, Lead Head of Government for the CSME; and H.E. Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Guyana, Lead Head of Government for Agriculture.

## **CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)**

Heads of Government reviewed the state of readiness of the Member States of the Community to begin full operation of the Single Market by December 2005 and in respect of their full integration into the CSME, including the preparation of their domestic economies and implementation of treaty obligations.

Heads of Government welcomed the fast-track steps taken by Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago to become Single Market compliant since March 2005 and took note of the strenuous efforts being made by all the remaining Member States to achieve Single Market treaty-compliance and overall readiness. They reflected on the constraints which Member States faced and the challenges of accelerated integration among states of differing capabilities and competitive strengths and reaffirmed their commitment to the long-held Community principle of special and differential treatment for the disadvantaged among the Member States.

The Lead Prime Minister for CSME, the Rt. Hon. Owen S. Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados will visit the OECS to confer with his colleague Heads of Government on the measures necessary to address their concerns, especially as they relate to the provisions for special and differential treatment under the Revised Treaty. The findings of the visit will be incorporated into a Report setting out recommendations to be incorporated into an affirmative action programme which is intended to ensure that there is greater equity in the distribution of the benefits of the CSME. The Lead Prime Minister will also visit Belize, Guyana and Suriname.

Heads of Government emphasised the importance of the Development Fund for removing the inequalities in the single economic space, and therefore the need for urgent implementation in line with that of the Single Market. They requested the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP) to meet in September to finalise the recommendations for operationalising the Fund.

Heads of Government also reiterated the value that the inclusion of stakeholders, including business, labour and universities would bring to the process of moving to the single economy, and welcomed the decision of the COFAP that it would meet with the private sector at the beginning of each year.

The Bahamas reported on the state of the public debate in that country regarding the signing of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Member States agreed that in the circumstances of the particular position of The Bahamas, the status quo of its present relationship and involvement in CARICOM institutions should be maintained.

### **Free Movement of Skilled Community Nationals**

With respect to the free movement of skilled nationals, Heads of Government agreed that CARICOM nationals who are entering under the Free Movement Regime with a Skills

Certificate issued by a Member State other than the receiving State should be allowed to work immediately while their qualifications are verified by the receiving State. The Conference also agreed that the review of proposals for the expansion of the eligible categories of skilled nationals would be completed in time for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference.

### **Issuance of the CARICOM Passport**

Heads of Government noted that St. Vincent and the Grenadines now joins Suriname, the first Member State to issue national passports using the common CARICOM format. Several other Member States are expected to introduce the new passport format in 2005 and 2006. December 2007 has been identified as the time frame for completing the introduction of the new passport format by all Member States.

### **Agriculture**

Heads of Government urged the speedy implementation of the measures to address the constraints faced by the agricultural sector. This is even more important at a time when the Region's major traditional agriculture commodities are facing increasing external threats to their survival.

The Lead Head of Government for Agriculture, President Jagdeo of Guyana, has been mandated to urgently convene a meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and the Private Sector to focus on the implementation of the interventions required to address these constraints. As the Community moves towards the Single Economy, improving the competitiveness of agriculture has become a priority.

Heads of Government agreed that the Prime Minister of Barbados, Lead Head of Government for the CSME, in his mission to Member States would also explore the possibilities for securing the Regional market for key Regional agricultural products. The results of this review would contribute to the development of the regime for special and differential treatment for disadvantaged countries, regions and sectors. Heads of Government urged Member States to provide support for the implementation of the Plan of Action from the Jagdeo Initiative.

Heads of Government considered the proposals for reform of the EU Sugar Regime released by the European Commission on 22 June 2005 and their implications for CARICOM sugar producing countries and the integration movement as a whole. They issued a [Statement](#) which is attached to this Communiqué.

### **Report of the Commission on Health and Development**

Heads of Government commended Sir George Alleyne, Chair of the Commission on Health and Development for a very informative Report that fully demonstrated the importance of health to the economic development of the Region. They recommended that the Report be widely distributed and discussed. They also urged the COHSOD to

establish an agenda for the implementation of the recommendations and report on the progress made to their Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting.

The Meeting also commended Prime Minister Douglas for leading a successful PANCAP mission to Brazil in April, and noted that the CARICOM Secretariat is to follow up with the Ministry of Health in Brazil on the Letter of Agreement which includes support from the Government of Brazil for the HIV/AIDS care and treatment programme of the OECS involving the provision of Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs) for 500 People Living with AIDS (PLWA) over a five-year period.

### **Issues Related to Crime and Security**

Heads of Government received a presentation on developments relating to security in the Region. It was recognised that the issue of security needed to be frontally addressed and effectively tackled in order to maintain sustainable development.

They endorsed the Management Framework for Crime and Security which makes provision for a Council of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement to superintend policy direction; a Security Policy Advisory Committee (SEPAC); and an Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS).

Heads of Government expressed their conviction that the new Management Framework would contribute significantly to successfully addressing issues of Crime and Security in the Region.

### **Issues Related to Cricket**

Heads of Government considered the persistent crisis in West Indies Cricket, and in particular, the deteriorating relations between the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the West Indies Players Association (WIPA). They agreed to:

- invite the WICB to become an Associate Institution of the Community;
- provide material support for a programme for the development of West Indies Cricket, given its critical place in Caribbean integration and development;
- invite the Board and the Players' Association to establish immediately a "Good Offices Mechanism" comprising three eminent Caribbean persons to assist in the resolution of disputes between the Board and the Association;
- re-affirm that the authority of the WICB in the selection and discipline of players must remain sacrosanct .

Heads of Government were apprised of security issues arising out of the contractual obligations of Member States in respect of the hosting of CWC 2007 and the legislative

and other security measures which must be put in place at the regional level to ensure the successful and safe conduct of the tournament.

They agreed that the Management Framework for Crime and Security should also include a Co-ordinating Unit to harmonize the security procedures to be put in place throughout the Region and to function as the liaison between CWC 2007 and regional Governments, and in particular the Ministers responsible for National Security and Law enforcement, in matters pertaining to regional security arising out of the hosting of Cricket World Cup (CWC) 2007.

### **External Trade Negotiations**

Heads of Government reviewed developments in the various external trade negotiations in which the Region is involved. They noted that the rapidly changing international environment was less accommodating of preferential arrangements, such as those that traditionally characterised the Region's trade relations. They reiterated the Region's commitment to and active participation in ongoing external trade negotiations, but observed that the current challenges including the tardy progress on special and differential treatment for small, vulnerable economies and the general push for reciprocity were beginning to raise uncertainty about the costs and the benefits involved. They reiterated their commitment to undertake the necessary internal adjustments to make their economies more competitive but indicated that the speed of current external developments was threatening to derail this process.

Heads of Government noted the intensification of multilateral trade negotiations in the WTO, but that progress in resolving the outstanding issues continued to be slow, with many of the concerns of the small, vulnerable economies such as those of the Caribbean Community still to be addressed. They expressed the hope that the upcoming mini-Ministerial Meeting in China would result in accommodations that could facilitate a positive outcome at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005.

Heads of Government noted that agreement for the resumption of FTAA negotiations to which they remain committed, continues to be elusive and that a number of hemispheric countries were pursuing bilateral free trade agreements. They agreed that the Community would continue to explore options for structured trade arrangements with other countries or groupings within the hemisphere.

Heads of Government reaffirmed the Region's commitment, in close collaboration with the Dominican Republic, in concluding an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union. They emphasised that it was imperative for such an agreement to incorporate a development dimension, which would complement the new WTO compatible trade arrangements of the EPA.

### **2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment**

Heads of Government received a presentation on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment conducted during the period 2001-2005. They noted that the Assessment was called for in 2000. It was conducted to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems.

They noted the disturbing finding of the Assessment that human actions are putting such a strain on the environment that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations could no longer be taken for granted. They agreed that Member States should study the findings and recommendations of the Report.

### **2005 Hurricane Season**

Heads of Government expressed concern for those countries in the Region which were already under threat from tropical storms so early in the Hurricane Season, noting that during the course of their meeting, Tropical Storm Dennis was threatening the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica.

They urged all countries and territories in the region to ensure that the necessary hurricane precautionary measures and mitigation plans are in place and called on the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) to work with participating Members to this end. They reiterated their commitment to provide mutual support to assist, within their means, any Member State, Associate Member and neighbouring country that may be affected in what has been predicted to be a very active hurricane season.

### **Re-organisation of the Meetings of the Conference**

Heads of Government agreed that there was need to revisit the structure of, and format for the meetings of the Conference to allow for maximum time for discussion among themselves on critical and strategic issues facing the Community. To this end, they requested the Secretary-General to undertake appropriate consultations with a view to preparing proposals for restructuring their meetings – both Inter-Sessional and Regular – for consideration at the Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting in 2006. They commended the Secretary-General for the measures put in place at this meeting aimed at initiating this process of restructuring the meetings of the Conference.

### **UN Reform**

Heads of Government noted that Member States are favourably disposed toward an expansion of the United Nations Security Council. They however, firmly hold the view that Security Council reform should not diminish the importance of the other aspects of the reform process, such as the development agenda, revitalisation and strengthening of the General Assembly and reform of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

They indicated that a significant number of Member States are inclined to support the G4 Framework Resolution contingent on:

- strong support for their development agenda as small, vulnerable states;
- inclusion of the proposals of the African Union in relation to expansion of the Security Council;
- acceptance of the principle of rotation of membership on the Security Council;

In this context, they requested CARICOM Permanent Representatives to the United Nations to work towards arriving at a common CARICOM position on the issue of UN Reform, monitoring developments closely and liaising with their Foreign Ministers.

### **Terrorism**

Heads of Government endorsed the position adopted by the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) at its Eighth Meeting in The Bahamas on 1-2 June 2005 regarding the detention by US immigration officials of Mr. Luis Posada Carriles. This individual has been long associated with acts of violence against the Government of Cuba and is a primary suspect as one of the authors of the most horrific act of terrorism ever experienced by the countries of CARICOM, the 1976 bombing of a Cuban aircraft in international waters off Barbados.

They called for all the perpetrators of this act of terrorism to be brought to justice and so bring closure to this egregious incident which caused so much pain to the people of the Region.

### **OAS General Assembly**

Heads of Government welcomed the election of Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin as Assistant Secretary General of the Organisation of American States at elections held during the XXXV Meeting of the OAS General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on 7 June 2005. They noted that the newly elected Secretary-General of the OAS, His Excellency Jose Miguel Insulza, had presided over his first meeting of the General Assembly in that capacity. Heads of Government stressed their conviction that under the guidance of the new team at the OAS, the work of the organisation will proceed in a manner which meets the expectations of the people of the hemisphere.

### **Haiti**

Heads of Government noted with great concern the continuing deterioration of the situation in Haiti in all respects. Widespread abuse of due process and fundamental rights, spiraling crime, in particular kidnapping, lawlessness and acts of violence, along with a lack of improvement in the social and economic situation had made life even more unbearable, especially in the capital.

The slow progress in the preparations for elections as well as the increasingly unstable political and security environment were seen as obstacles to timely and well-run elections. A free, fair and inclusive process was regarded as imperative, without which the return to constitutional rule would lack legitimacy.

Heads of Government noted the discussions between the CARICOM Electoral support and the Provisional Elections Council, the United Nations and the OAS, and CARICOM's readiness to provide technical assistance support for the process under the umbrella of MINUSTAH.

Heads reiterated the importance they attach to improvement in the human rights, political, security and economic domains without which there could be neither stability nor the possibility of socio-economic and institutional development, which were so vitally required.

As concerns the Community's engagement in favour of the people of Haiti, Heads of Government decided that CARICOM would be ready to participate in the international observation of elections when the conditions on the ground were conducive.

### **Rio Group**

Heads of Government confirmed that Guyana would continue to represent the Region in the Rio Group for another two years. They welcomed the fact that Guyana, representing CARICOM, would be assuming the Chairmanship of the Rio Group as of January 2006. They pledged their support to Guyana as it carries out this task. Heads of Government expressed the conviction that participation by the Region in the Rio Group would continue to strengthen CARICOM's relations with the countries of Latin America. In this regard, they also supported the application of Belize for membership on an individual basis of the Rio Group.

### **Belize-Guatemala Relations**

Heads of Government were briefed on the ongoing process in respect of the Belize-Guatemala Territorial Differendum.

Heads of Government reaffirmed the unequivocal support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belize and urged the two countries to intensify the process of negotiations under the auspices of the OAS in order to bring the territorial claim to an early end through a peaceful, just and definitive resolution of the Territorial Differendum between the two countries. They expressed appreciation for the work of the office of the Secretariat of the OAS in the adjacency zone to maintain peace and improve relations between the peoples of the two countries, especially in the border area, and appealed to countries to support the special OAS Fund for that purpose.

### **Guyana-Venezuela Relations**

Heads of Government noted with satisfaction that relations between Guyana and Venezuela continued to be cordial.

They underscored the importance of the ongoing dialogue at the level of Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs in promoting this cordiality, and noted that such dialogue had resulted in a renewal of commitment to a peaceful settlement of the controversy through the mechanism of the United Nations Good Offices Process (GOP) and to functional cooperation under the aegis of the Guyana-Venezuela High-Level Bilateral Commission.

Heads of Government reiterated their full support for the preservation of Guyana's sovereignty and its right to the unrestricted development of all its territory for the benefit of its people.

### **The Caribbean Diaspora**

Heads of Government reiterated the need to develop a strategy to enhance relations between the Community and its Diaspora in the metropolitan centres. To this end, they requested the Chair of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) to meet with representatives of the Caribbean Diaspora at least once a year.

### **Relations with the African Union**

Heads of Government welcomed the initiatives being taken to strengthen the relationship between the African Union and the Community. They expressed appreciation for the decision of the AU to include the Diaspora as its Sixth Region. They noted with satisfaction, the report of the Conference co-hosted by the Governments of South Africa and Jamaica with the theme "Towards Unity and United Action by Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a better world."

Heads asserted that they would use the opportunities presented in international fora to engage their African Union counterparts. On behalf of the Community, the Secretary-General conveyed a [message to the African Union on the occasion of the Fifth Ordinary Session of its Assembly](#).

### **CARICOM-Cuba Summit**

Heads of Government recalled their undertaking to meet with the President of Cuba on a triennial basis to discuss issues of mutual interest. They agreed to the convening of the Summit in Barbados on 8 December 2005, and proposed the theme "Caribbean Strategies for Human Security".

### **Appreciation**

Heads of Government expressed gratitude to the Government and People of Saint Lucia for the warm hospitality extended and the excellent arrangements made during the

Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Conference. They particularly appreciated the social and cultural activities and the arrangements for the First CARICOM 10K race which contributed in no small measure to the congenial atmosphere in which the Conference unfolded.

Heads of Government congratulated the Secretary-General and staff of the Secretariat for their hard work, which contributed to the successful outcome of the meeting.

### **Date and Venue of the Next Inter-Sessional Meeting**

Heads of Government were pleased to accept the offer from the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to host the Seventeenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference on 9-10 February 2006.

6 July 2005  
Gros Islet, Saint Lucia

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## **ATTACHMENT**

### **STATEMENT ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSALS FOR REFORM OF THE EU SUGAR REGIME**

The Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at their Twenty-Sixth Session in Saint Lucia on 3-6 July, 2005, considered the recent proposals by the European Commission for reform of the EU Sugar Regime and protest in the strongest terms the severe and dislocating loss of benefits from the Sugar Protocol which would result, if the Commission's proposals published on June 22, 2005, are implemented.

Heads of Government expressed deep concern that should the drastic action of a cut in price of 39% proposed by the Commission run its course, the abrupt loss of revenue derived from the Sugar Protocol by CARICOM sugar producing countries would devastate the most important agricultural enterprise in the Region and a profound blow would be dealt to the small, vulnerable developing economies involved. Heads expressed their strong opposition to the proposal by the Commission to pass on to the ACP sugar producers, as an element of the proposed 39% reduction, the cost that will arise as a result of the proposed abolition of refining aid now paid to the EU refiners.

CARICOM Heads of Government reaffirmed that the Sugar Protocol is no mere "preferential arrangement" which can be unilaterally changed by the EU. It is an agreement between two parties, with a special legal status, by which one side guarantees supplies and the other guarantees access for an unlimited duration of stated amounts of sugar, at an annually negotiated price. When this legal instrument was being negotiated, the world price of sugar was higher than the price offered under the Sugar Protocol,

which, was accepted in good faith by the Caribbean and all ACP countries. There is therefore no weight in claiming now, as the Commission does, that the Protocol price is higher than the world price and therefore has to be reduced.

CARICOM Heads of Government recalled that in Article 36(4) of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement, it is recognized that any review of the Sugar Protocol would be undertaken “with a view to safeguarding the benefits to therefrom”. The Commission’s proposals therefore run counter to the Cotonou Agreement and the commitment to negotiate annually the guaranteed price paid to ACP sugar suppliers.

CARICOM Heads of Government recalled the repeated pronouncements of the European Union in favour of a development dimension in all trade arrangements and in support of a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round of international trade negotiations. They also recalled the EU’s declared determination to do everything possible to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The Commission proposals to dislocate and seriously reduce the value of the Sugar Protocol runs counter to all such pronouncements and declarations.

CARICOM Heads of Government also recalled the often-reiterated assurances by EU representatives that the Region’s vital interests will be safeguarded, and by Commissioner of Trade Peter Mandelson, to CARICOM Trade Ministers earlier this year during a visit to Guyana that the effect of the Commission proposals would be neutral and that funding from the EU would anticipate rather than cushion change.

Heads further recalled that Prime Minister Blair in a letter to Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica at the end of December 2003, promised to ensure that any inevitable changes to trade regimes should be phased at a rate that would enable CARICOM economies to adjust. Heads called on the United Kingdom in its Presidency of the EU to ensure that this promise is honoured. The Heads of Government commended those EU Member States that are opposed to the Commission’s proposals and have called for less drastic price cuts and a longer transition period.

Heads of Government asserted that as CARICOM sugar industries are undertaking programmes of restructuring, modernisation, adaptation and diversification, the European Commission must clearly understand that any change affecting the functioning of these industries, most important, the trading relationship - the Sugar Protocol must be implemented so that there is an adequate transitional period to adjust to any cumulative reduction in sugar revenue, with the minimum dislocation and economic trauma. In this regard, Heads of Government called upon the European Commission to expedite the financial and other assistance required by the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis to effect the transition out of the production of sugar for export, being cognizant of the need to develop a new strategy for national economic development and hence the urgency for immediate action.

6 July 2005  
Gros Islet, Saint Lucia

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**MESSAGE FROM THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) TO THE  
AFRICAN UNION (AU)  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE  
ASSEMBLY**

The Caribbean Community conveys warm and fraternal wishes to the African Union (AU). It is with great pleasure that the kind invitation to our Secretary-General to be a specially invited guest to the Fifth Ordinary Session of Assembly of the African Union and to address the Opening Session was received. We were honored by this gesture and deeply regret that the coincidence of dates with our Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government - the supreme organ of the Caribbean Community - has prevented his attendance.

The launch of the African Union in Durban in 2002 was an historic event for the Continent of Africa. In the three short years since this event, the African Union has made its presence felt in the International Community. CARICOM congratulates the African Union on its achievements. Our Community follows with great interest the creative efforts of the AU in the development of new institutional arrangements to achieve the objective of accelerating integration in the continent to enable Africa to play its rightful place in the International Community. We are heartened by the decision of the African Union to include its Diaspora as the Sixth Region and to involve the representatives of the Caribbean Diaspora in deliberations in the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the civil society advisory group.

The bonds between the African Continent and the Caribbean are strong. A large proportion of our population can trace their ancestral roots to Africa. For many years we have worked closely with AU Member States in many fora, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group, the Commonwealth and the United Nations. The Caribbean supported the efforts of the people of Southern Africa to eradicate the scourge of apartheid. Many of our professionals have given their services to the African Continent. The advent of the African Union has strengthened these ties and has created the opportunity for future cooperation between Africa and the Caribbean at all levels.

If both our Regions have chosen the sometimes complex route of integration to fulfill our aspirations of socio-economic prosperity, it is because of our mutual belief that our greatest strength and consequence potential to tackle the future development needs of our respective Regions lies in unity and solidarity.

We welcomed the visit to our Community of the President of South Africa in July 2003 during our 30th anniversary celebrations, particularly in light of the fact that it was during his tenure as the First President of the African Union. His visit highlighted the spirit of cooperation between the Caribbean and opened the doors for greater collaboration and solidarity between Africa and the Caribbean. The presence of Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados - the Lead Head of Government with responsibility for the the Community's

flagship, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) - at the Second Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique was a demonstration of our commitment to work with the African Union to address our common problems and to strengthen our alliance in the face of global challenges. The meeting between CARICOM Heads of Government and some AU Member States at the time of the Commonwealth Heads in Abuja and the signing of a memorandum of understanding for future cooperation by our Foreign Ministers are other demonstrations of our commitment to the process of deeper collaboration.

At the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government on 3-5 July 2005, Heads of Government will receive a report of the outcome of the conference which was co-sponsored by the Government of Jamaica and South Africa on 16th-18th March 2005 under the theme, "Towards Unity and United Action by Africans and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean for a better world". This conference which was attended by all CARICOM Member States with representatives from both the public sector and civil society, recommended the further development of a concrete mechanism for the institutionalization of the relationships between the AU and CARICOM, identified specific areas for collaboration and the building of linkages between countries in Africa and the Caribbean, called for collaboration among civil society and agreed that CARICOM and the AU would explore ways to harness international diplomacy to promote our mutual objectives in the UN and the WTO. The endorsement of these recommendations by the CARICOM Heads of Government will allow for the mainstreaming of these initiatives in the work programme of the Community. The CARICOM Secretariat looks forward to working with the AU Secretariat to further these initiatives following the meetings of our respective Heads of Government.

Today, a significant number of the world's poorest people live in the countries that are Member States of the AU, yet this continent is the source of some of the world's richest resources. The adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the AU, is a reflection of your determination to harness your own resources to extricate yourselves from poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization. The Caribbean Community would like to offer its support in these efforts. We have observed with interest the steps which have been taken to implement this strategic framework for Africa's development. We share your view that good governance is a basic requirement for peace and security and in this context we welcome your design and implementation of the Peer Review Mechanism. This is scheme worthy of emulation in our own Region.

We also welcome the recent G8 Africa Action Plan which promises debt relief, increased aid flows, a commitment to improve global market access for African exports and an agreement to provide medical assistance to the continent. We note however, that even as these measures are discussed there are developments in the marketing of commodities, such as sugar and cotton, which negatively impact the future of many countries in both of our Regions. We share your concerns about the slow progress of the implementation of the Doha Development Work programme in the WTO. We encourage our trade negotiators to continue their collaboration so as to ensure that the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference yields positive results for both our Regions.

One of the common items on our respective Heads of Governments agendas is the preparations for the 60th Session of the UN General Assembly where the subject of the reform of the United Nations will be a major focus as well as High Level Plenary on the Millennium Declaration, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. CARICOM notes with interest the Ezulwini Consensus which sets out the AU position on United Nations reform. CARICOM Heads of Government will determine our Community's position at their current session bearing in mind that the decisions taken on UN reform will have long-lasting consequences for the functioning of the organisation, as well as for the development, security, and human rights issues that fall within its purview. The High Level Plenary on the MDGs will be a unique opportunity to refocus the global attention on matters of development and to seek to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the management of global economic affairs.

The Caribbean Community stands ready to strengthen its partnership with the African Union and takes this opportunity to wish you a fruitful and successful Fifth Assembly.

Castries, Saint Lucia  
1 July 2005