

Departamento de América Latina y el Caribe

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Second Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Caricom-Cuba, 29 May 2007, Kingstown, St. Vincent and The Grenadines

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The Second CARICOM-Cuba Ministerial Meeting took place on 29 May 2007 in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, under the joint Chairmanship of the Honourable Elvin Nimrod, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Grenada and outgoing Chairman of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations, and His Excellency Mr. Felipe Perez Roque, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

CARICOM was represented by:

H.E Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda; Hon Kerrie Symmonds, Minister of State of Barbados; Hon. Charles Savarin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Dominica; Hon. Elvin Nimrod, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Grenada; Dr the Hon. Henry Jeffrey, Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation of Guyana; Hon. Jean Renald Clerisme, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Haiti; Hon G. Anthony Hylton, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica; Hon. Dr Timothy Harris, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of St Kitts and Nevis; Hon Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of St Vincent and the Grenadines; and Hon Arnold Piggott, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, and their delegations.

Belize, Saint Lucia and Suriname were represented by Senior Officials.

Cuba was represented by:

Hon. Felipe Perez Roque and his delegation.

Inaugural Ceremony:

The Opening Ceremony was addressed by His Excellency Dr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, Honourable Sir Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Honourable Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

His Excellency Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary General of CARICOM, in his presentation, made mention of the links of kinship and of collaboration that created a bond between CARICOM and Cuba. He also expressed appreciation to Cuba for its support in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic while conceding that the Region still had a long way to go in that regard.

Pointing to the issue of climate change to which our Region is particularly vulnerable, the imminent hurricane season in the Caribbean and Cuba's track record of safeguarding its populace during these times, the CARICOM Secretary-General welcomed cooperation in this field, particularly as regards information relating to best practices, and conveyed on behalf of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre their gratitude for the information received from the Cuban Institute of Meteorology with regard to the prediction of weather patterns.

Dr. Carrington closed by congratulating all on the convening of the meeting which he stated was an indication that Cuba and the Caribbean Community were not only fully seized by the imperative placed on small states by the current international system to seek more and more ways of working together to achieve their development goals, but were acting on it.

In his address, Sir Louis extended a fraternal welcome to all participants in the meeting, informing that it provided a forum for dialogue on areas of cooperation, regional and international issues of mutual interest; to identify new forms of collaboration; and to review the implementation process with a view to addressing challenges which impede progress.

He also recalled the unique relationship that exists between CARICOM countries and Cuba, one based on solidarity and fraternity. In respect of solidarity, he highlighted the strong opposition of CARICOM countries to the embargo against Cuba and their continued commitment to the fight against terrorism in all its forms. Regarding fraternity, he affirmed that this has resulted in technical assistance, expertise, training activities in various areas such as education, health, sustainable development and disaster management to cite a few.

In conclusion, he called on the meeting to continue to work together to uplift the people of the Region and make an ever greater contribution to the ennoblement of the Caribbean civilization.

His Excellency Mr. Felipe Perez Roque, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, in his presentation stressed that Cuba attaches the highest priority to the close and friendly relationship with the Caribbean Community and reiterated the full support and commitment for enhanced cooperation in different areas including health, culture and social development among others.

He highlighted the importance that CARICOM countries and Cuba, as small states, attach to the protection and preservation of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources and the Caribbean Sea as well as the special interest of the Caribbean region in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime. In this regard, he affirmed that only a multilateral cooperation approach, one based on mutual respect and the principle of shared responsibility will effectively tackle these problems.

Affirming that regional integration, set in motion to serve the interests of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, requires the utmost priority, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba cited the current efforts of the Caribbean Community to implement the Single Market and Economy, as an indication that it is possible to move forward in relations of a new nature in the interest of our peoples and nations.

Describing bilateral relations between CARICOM countries and Cuba as dynamic and one that is steadily on the rise, Minister Roque took the opportunity to inform of the decision of his government to further enhance this cooperation by the opening of a new school of medicine in which four hundred youth from CARICOM countries will be enrolled for training.

The current state of relations and cooperation between Cuba and the Caribbean

The Ministers reviewed the advances made in the process of integration in the Caribbean since the holding of the Second Cuba-CARICOM Summit in December 2005, as well as the sterling efforts of their nations to strengthen regional ties, based on cooperation and solidarity, as one of the effective ways of responding to the major challenges posed by an international system which can have severe negative consequences for small and vulnerable countries.

The Ministers reiterated their firm commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, multilateralism and the fundamental principles of international law, including respect for sovereignty and the juridical equality of states, and non interference in the internal affairs of States, the prohibition of threats or the use of force in international relations, respect for territorial integrity, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the sovereign right of the citizens of every country to freely determine its system and political institutions in conditions of peace, stability and justice.

The Ministers renewed their firm commitment to the deepening of relations between their nations and to cooperation and joint efforts in the spheres of education, health, culture, sport, commerce and other areas of mutual interest, based on mutual respect and solidarity which constitute a condition for survival and the only alternative for offering an integrated response to the developmental needs and well being of the peoples of the Caribbean.

The Ministers decided to work towards the early signature of the Agreement for Cuba-CARICOM Cooperation in health matters, fulfilling the commitment to increase the concrete areas and initiatives for collaboration between the Caribbean Community and the Republic of Cuba.

The Ministers also decided to continue exchanges and consultations in order to examine new proposals presented in the area of cooperation, with the aim of submitting them for consideration and adoption during the III Cuba-CARICOM Summit to take place 8 December 2008 in Havana, Cuba.

Multilateral and Regional Issues

The Ministers reviewed the principal matters and issues that form part of the international agenda and constitute a priority for the region, such as the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, the protection and conservation of the environment, the issue of climate change, the impact of HIV-AIDS in the region, the fight against illicit drug trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime, the struggle against international terrorism, the role of the Non Aligned Movement since the holding of the XIV Summit, as well as other issues of interest to the Parties.

The Ministers reaffirmed the reality of a shared Caribbean identity which increases opportunities for coordination, cooperation and agreement on positions for the promotion and protection of common values, objectives and interests in different forums and international organizations.

The Ministers recognized the vulnerability of the region to natural disasters, climate change, external economic crises, the spread of HIV-AIDS in the Caribbean and other issues such as the illicit drug trade, and assessed the impact of these phenomena on the development efforts of their nations.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the agreed goals of international development, including the Millennium Development Goals, highlighting sustainable development as a key element in the general framework of the activities of the United Nations and in this context they stressed the importance of increasing international cooperation and international aid flows for development.

The Ministers reiterated their commitment to strengthening protection and conservation of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources especially the Region's priceless and unique resource, the Caribbean Sea, and in this respect to continue promoting initiatives in multilateral fora, and particularly at the ACS and the UN, to achieve the recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development.

The Ministers agreed to support initiatives which promote the worldwide debate on climate change, especially the holding of a high level summit or conference as soon as possible, given the urgent need to take steps which require universal participation and political commitment. Climate change, by its very nature, is closely linked to sustainable development. As a consequence, developed countries should live up not only to the commitments to the reduction of greenhouse gases, but also to their commitments in the areas of official development aid, which will permit economic growth and sustainable development for the countries of the South through the eradication of hunger and poverty, the guarantee of food security and access to clean technologies, among other issues.

The Ministers renewed their commitment to collaboration and cooperation in capacity development in national and regional planning for prevention, mitigation and recovery in response to natural disasters and, in this respect, apply best practices in their joint plans and programmes of response and rehabilitation at the regional level.

The Ministers recognized that HIV-AIDS continues to be a grave threat which menaces the future of their nations and the sustainable human development of the Caribbean Region and signalled the commitment to redouble collaboration in responding to this pandemic.

The Ministers registered their profound dissatisfaction at the lack of progress made in the trade negotiations in relation to the issues of development which lie at the heart of the Doha Work Programme for Development, such as the special and differential treatment for small and vulnerable economies. In this respect they noted the restart of the Doha Development round and viewed with some alarm the slow pace of negotiations. They called on the developed countries in particular to display flexibility and the political will required to emerge from the current situation.

The Ministers reiterated their firm condemnation of unilateral and extra-territorial imposition of coercive laws and measures contrary to international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of free navigation and trade in the world and urged the Government of the United States of America to heed the overwhelming call of the members of the United Nations to immediately lift the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed against the Republic of Cuba and to halt the imposition of the measures adopted in May 2004 and in July 2006 to aggravate that policy, which has grave consequences for the socio-economic development and well being of the Cuban people.

The Ministers agreed to strengthen the collective and individual efforts of their struggle against the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through the Caribbean and, in this respect, increase regional and international cooperation to confront this scourge, in keeping with the principles adopted by the General Assembly of the UN and in strict adherence to international law and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

The Ministers reconfirmed their categorical and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and formulated the attached Statement.

The Ministers welcomed the resolutions of the XIV Summit of Non Aligned Nations, held in Havana, Cuba, in September 2006, at which the full incorporation into the Movement of the Republic of Haiti and of St. Kitts and Nevis took place, with the result that all the independent states which make up the Caribbean Community are now members of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM). The Ministers noted the Cuban report on the performance of the Presidency of the Movement since September 2006, and expressed their commitment to continue working together in the revitalisation and strengthening of the NAM as a forum for the coordination and promotion of the interests and priorities of the developing world on the multilateral stage.

The Ministers adopted a Statement on Terrorism which is attached to this Communiqué.

Appreciation

The Ministers expressed their deep gratitude to the Government and the People of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the warm welcome and hospitality provided during the Second Meeting of the Ministers of CARICOM - Cuba

Approved in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on 29 May 2007.