

Departamento de América Latina y el Caribe

Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Communique Issued at the Conclusion of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (Cohsod) of the Caribbean Community (Caricom), 10-12 October 2007, Georgetown, Guyana

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(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana) The Sixteenth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which focussed on Youth and Culture, was convened at Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana on 10-12 October 2007 under the theme, Realising the Potential of Youth and Culture in the Development of the Community.

The Hon. Cynthia Forde, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, Barbados chaired the Meeting.

In attendance were: Hon. Eleston M Adams, Minister with Responsibility for Culture in the Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture and Environment, Antigua and Barbuda; Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, and Dr. the Hon. Desrey Caesar Fox, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, both of Guyana; and Hon Edwin T. Wolf, Minister of Education, Suriname.

Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands were represented.

The Netherlands Antilles was a special invitee to the Meeting.

OPENING

Dr. Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat, welcomed the Delegates to the Meeting and noted the achievements of the COHSOD, chief of which were: the coordination of the activities leading up to the Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) held on 15 September 2007 in Trinidad and Tobago which resulted in the Declaration of Port-of-Spain establishing 18 actionable programmes to address NCDs; and the coordination of the Task Force on Functional Cooperation resulting from the Declaration of Needham's Point, Barbados at the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government which has mandated that through cooperation in a variety of areas, including the social sectors, the goal is to achieve "A Community for All."

He noted that the Council had also piloted some important policies and programmes over the past year, a number of which would form the basis for the deliberations of the Meeting. Dr. Greene expressed thanks to the immediate past Chairs of the COHSOD, namely, the Hon. Anthony Wood, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport and Dr. the Hon. Jerome Walcott, Minister of Health, both of Barbados, for their leadership which facilitated the work of the Directorate of Human and Social Development of the Secretariat.

The Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Guyana expressed a warm welcome to the representatives of Member States, Associate Members, regional and international organisations and institutions and pledged his country's commitment and support to youth development. He applauded the establishment of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development which, he stated, needed to play its role in providing the information necessary for policy formulation and programme development for youth.

Acknowledging the importance of culture to regional development, Minister Anthony noted that in a hostile trade environment, traditional outputs alone could not sustain economic development. He advocated diversification and the promotion of cultural industries which offered many opportunities.

H.E. Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary General, CARICOM, underscored the significance of this Meeting, stating that "the challenge of mainstreaming culture into development thinking and practice in the Region was one which the Meeting needed to address as the Community examined policy and practice to ensure that the potential of culture was realised."

He stated that the success of the Single Market and Economy hinged as much on the appropriate development and participation of the people as it did on legislative and administrative regimes which set the parameters for its operations. In this context, the COHSOD played a critical role.

Highlighting three major milestones of the Council - the landmark Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases; the impending launch of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) and the partnership between the CARICOM Youth Ambassador (CYA) Programme and telecommunications service provider of Suriname, Telesur - the Secretary General iterated that those were accomplished in the spirit of functional cooperation and that their successes were reflective of the critical role that the COHSOD plays in achieving the ultimate goal of the community, a "better quality of life for all."

He further charged the Council to ensure that the actions ensuing from the CARICOM Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases were pursued forthwith.

Chair of the Meeting the Hon Cynthia Forde, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Barbados congratulated the Secretariat for its milestone achievements in education, health and sport, noting that the staging of the ICC World Cup Cricket as well as other international sporting activities within the Region spoke volumes of what cooperation could achieve.

She stated that the Caribbean had "a special brand that is distinctive and well worth promoting and preserving," hence the need to promote cultural industries and to "provide

a firm and sustainable economic base for our artists, athletes and cricketers.”

Commenting on the youth agenda, she said that the focus of the youth agenda assumed critical importance and pledged her country's full support to the youth agenda and specifically, to the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (CCYD).

The Meeting also recognised Dr Lucy Steward, Registrar of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) for her outstanding leadership in education and for her untiring efforts in promoting the programmes of the CXC.

In presenting the Citation on behalf of the COHSOD, Amb. Lolita Applewhaite, Deputy Secretary- General, CARICOM lauded Dr Steward for her sterling contribution to education in the Region and for the quality leadership that she had provided for the CXC for over fourteen years.

Ambassador Applewhaite enumerated the achievements of Dr Steward and commended her untiring efforts in promoting new initiatives in the CXC, serving as its unofficial ambassador, while putting a face to the organisation, thus facilitating wide- ranging acceptance of its programmes within the Caribbean.

Dr Steward thanked the COHSOD for the citation and for the support she had received and noted that her work was made less challenging because of the high level of professionalism displayed by Staff of the CARICOM Secretariat and educators in the Region.

Of the achievements of which she was most proud, Dr Steward said, was the fact that CXC now has students in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles and were thinking of expanding to other territories. She expressed hope that those two countries would become full members of the Council very soon.

The Opening Ceremony closed with the signing of the partnership agreement between Telesur and the CARICOM Secretariat for youth development through Information and Communication Technology. In signing the agreement, Mr Dirk Currie, Chief Executive Officer of Telesur called on the Private Sector to invest in activities that promote youth development, as “an investment in youth is more than equal to an investment in the future of our Caribbean nations.”

Mr John Darville, Interim Dean of the CYA expressed thanks on behalf of the meeting and acknowledged key players in the development of Youth and Culture in the Caribbean.

A special welcome was extended to the Delegation of the Netherlands Antilles.

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH AND CULTURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

The COHSOD reviewed the issues, challenges and opportunities associated with youth and culture development; acknowledged the high social costs of ignoring youth and culture issues such as unemployment, education, recreation, crime and exclusion; and endorsed a raft of recommendations in fostering youth and culture development in the Community.

The COHSOD approved a number of recommendations including the creation of an enabling environment through the strengthening of legislative framework for youth and culture policies; increasing the resources allocated to youth and culture portfolios and capacity-building of Ministries of Culture and Youth; the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to engage youth, thereby creating greater access to technology; and utilising the formal education system to promote regional ideologies, identities and integration, thus creating the ideal CARICOM Citizen.

CARICOM COMMISSION ON YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The COHSOD received a progress report on the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development which included the results of a preliminary assessment of the situation of Caribbean youth 10 – 29 years, which had been undertaken to provide the Commission with technical assistance, direction and support in refining research priorities for a follow-up comprehensive regional assessment. It noted that the sample of 289 comprised youth, parents, community leaders and police officers in The Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

YOUTH RISK, VULNERABILITY AND PROTECTION: REDUCING CRIME AND VIOLENCE

The COHSOD reviewed the findings of a preliminary assessment of the situation of Caribbean youth with particular focus on issues pertaining to youth risk and vulnerability. The Report called for the adoption of new, holistic and innovative strategies, partnerships and legislative arrangements empowering communities to identify and address their own development priorities; and for strategic alliances with the Police, Departments of Youth Affairs, youth organisations and other key stakeholders, including persons most admired by young people.

The COHSOD also received a report highlighting trends and realities of young people engaged in or affected by crime and gun-gang violence in Burger Gully, Kingston, Jamaica.

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The COHSOD considered a Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) Report on the Cultural Industries in CARICOM and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop on "Promoting Creative Industries – Towards a Trade and Investment Strategy", which was held in Barbados on 25-26 October 2006. It recognised that the cultural industries in CARICOM are an important and growing sector that has tremendous potential for further expansion, job-creation and exports.

The COHSOD recommended that Member States expedite the establishment of national registries of artists and cultural workers in a manner which would allow mutual access by all Member States. The recommendation was also made for the introduction of targeted economic incentives for cultural industries in the Region to stimulate their growth and development and urged Member States and the relevant regional agencies to actively promote Pan-Caribbean collaboration and a harmonised approach to the cultural industries.

The Meeting endorsed the recommendation of the Twenty-Third Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) that a Task Force be established with representatives of national Customs Departments, Culture Departments, Finance Ministries, Trade Ministries, spokespersons for the audio-visual, visual arts, music and performing arts industries, CARICOM Secretariat and the CRNM. Member States were also requested to consider waiving the duties and other charges levied on a list of products that were inputs to cultural industries in order to reduce the cost of cultural goods and services and to enhance the competitiveness of this sector.

FINANCING CULTURE

The COHSOD discussed the urgent need to secure a sustainable pool of funds for financing culture projects in the region particularly in critical areas such as training, research, documentation, upgrading of infrastructure and facilities and for financing the implementation of the flagship cultural exposition, the Caribbean Festival of the Creative Arts (CARIFESTA) and supported the proposal for the merging of the CARICOM Foundation for Art and Culture and the CARIFORUM Cultural Support Funds into one fund, to be named the Caribbean Foundation for Arts and Culture.

The Meeting also endorsed the call made by H.E. Drs. Rinaldo R Venetiaan, President of Suriname and Lead CARICOM Head with responsibility for Youth and Culture, at the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government (2006), for Member States to contribute to the Foundation.

OBSERVANCE OF THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The COHSOD reviewed regional and international activities during 2007 related to the Observance of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the British West Indies. These included the Resolution co-sponsored by Member States of CARICOM at the Sixty-First Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, which designated 25 March the International Day to observe the Bicentenary; public lectures; church services; exhibitions; panel discussions; and ritual ceremonies of commemoration in Member States, and a synchronised Minute of Silence on 25 March 2007.

The COHSOD endorsed the recommendations contained in the Outcome Document of the African Diaspora Global Conference and the Bicentennial Global Dialogue, held in Barbados in August 2007 and in particular, supported the establishment of an AU-CARICOM International Reparations Commission and/or High Level Panel of Eminent Persons to examine the issue of reparations to organise broad-based regional consultations on the matter; and coordinate follow-up action on relevant regional and international mandates.

The COHSOD also supported the proposal of the Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, for the establishment of a Permanent Memorial at the United Nations, and recommended that the observance of the Bicentenary be incorporated as a significant element in other regional programmes and events.

ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The COHSOD endorsed the recommendations of the Regional Meeting of CARICOM Directors of Youth Affairs which had preceded its Meeting, to accelerate the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Youth Development which was intended as a guide to Member States in planning and adopting integrated multi-sectoral approaches to youth development.

The COHSOD also endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Directors of Youth Affairs regarding increased investment in youth and strengthened institutional capacity of departments responsible for Youth Affairs.

CARIFESTA

The COHSOD reviewed the progress, to date, in the implementation of the new governance model of the Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) and discussed the lessons learnt from the staging of the most recent, CARIFESTA IX, in Trinidad and Tobago. The opportunity was taken to express appreciation to the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago for the successful staging of CARIFESTA IX.

The COHSOD agreed that the lessons learnt were critical to the planning of the next festival and in this regard, expressed support to Guyana in staging a successful CARIFESTA X.

The COHSOD approved the introduction of the Host Country Agreement and the principle of bidding in the selection of host countries for future CARIFESTAs. It noted that the principle of bidding for the selection of the host countries and the signing of a Host Country Agreement were elements that were introduced in the strategic plan for CARIFESTA. The Host Country Agreement was intended to ensure the timely, efficient and effective staging of the festival and the bidding was intended to ensure transparency in the procedure for selecting the host country.

FREE MOVEMENT OF ARTISTS AND CULTURAL WORKERS The COHSOD discussed a number of difficulties being experienced by artists and cultural workers in the implementation of the Free Movement provision of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and in particular, the challenges experienced by this category of workers in moving with their tools of trade and creative works. It noted with concern the barriers encountered in various Member States in terms of tariffs and other duties and charges to be paid. The COHSOD agreed that relevant follow-up action by the COHSOD and the (COTED should include a modified list of approved categories of artists and cultural workers for free movement, as well as the introduction of new conditional duty exemptions related to the free movement of tools of trade and creative works owned by artists and cultural workers. The COHSOD agreed that the CARICOM Secretariat and the Member States should give greater prominence through its public education programmes to developments related to the increasing range of persons qualified to move freely and to the establishment of a dedicated section within the Secretariat to deal with the resolution of difficulties encountered by CARICOM citizens.

In respect of the recommendation from the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government for the expansion of categories of persons entitled to Free Movement within the Community (except for Antigua and Barbuda) to include nurses, teachers and artisans, the COHSOD noted with pleasure that the Caribbean Vocational

Qualification (CVQ) would be launched in several countries and urged the issuance of the CVQ certificates to facilitate holders of such certificates the right to move across the Region.

The COHSOD also approved recommendations with regard to qualifications comparable to the Associate Degree.

INTERVENTIONS BY REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The COHSOD received a presentation from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on Addressing the Transition from Childhood to Youth. The recommendations called for the inclusion of the adolescent years (10-14) in policy development; more investment in the early years which would be more cost effective in the long term; the need to create a nurturing and enabling environment for young people and the adoption of the Life cycle Approach to youth development.

The COHSOD also acknowledged an intervention from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Secretariat on the OECS Youth Initiative which proposed a collaborative and integrated approach to youth development as well as the establishment of a clear division of labour among government agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), development partners, regional agencies and other stakeholders.

The COHSOD noted that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), had initiated a study on the situation of youth in select countries, namely, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago which, when expanded and refined, would provide information on the situation of youth in the Region.

The COHSOD endorsed the call by the Commonwealth Youth Programme for the adoption of a collaborative approach to youth development and in this regard proposed the convening of a meeting of development partners.

The COHSOD received summaries of the World Development Report 2007 and the Report on Youth Development titled, From Youth at Risk to Youth Development presented by the World Bank, which outlined opportunities and challenges in the areas of youth transitions including schooling, training, health risks, provision of second chances, working functional families and participation in civic life.

The COHSOD identified the need for greater attention to be given to the collection of reliable and current data to support policy formulation and mandated the CARICOM Task Force on Research on Social Statistics to engage governments and other agencies in the Region to facilitate closing this gap.

FOLLOW-UP ON MANDATES FROM THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

The COHSOD was brought up to date with the plans for follow-up to the CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) held in Trinidad and Tobago on 15 September 2007, including the proposals for the establishment of national NCD committees to assist in the coordination and implementation of the eighteen actionable

programmes in the Declaration of Port-of-Spain. The COHSOD urged the incorporation of strategies for reducing the impact of NCDs in the culture and youth programmes across the Region.

The COHSOD endorsed the priority programme areas in the Caribbean Cooperation in Health (CCH) Initiative which includes NCDs and mental health, as well as the proposals for the integration of the current Regional Health Institutions (RHIs) – the Caribbean Regional Epidemiology Centre (CAREC), Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) Caribbean Health Research Council (CHRC), Caribbean Regional Drug Testing Laboratory (CRDTL) and the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI) - into a Caribbean Public Health Agency.

The COHSOD pledged its support for follow up to the Conference on the Caribbean, held in Washington DC in June 2007, and in particular, those relating to cultural industries, health, tourism and the mobilisation of the Caribbean/US Diaspora skills, knowledge and professional networks.

REVISED CRITERIA FOR THE CARICOM TRIENNIAL AWARD FOR WOMEN

The COHSOD agreed that the Award structure for award of the CARICOM Triennial Award for Women and other awards, including the Order of the Caribbean Community (OCC) be reviewed with a view to developing a more comprehensive system of regional awards.

APPLICATIONS FOR OBSERVER STATUS

The COHSOD noted the increasing number of requests for Observer status in its meetings and recommended that Observer Status be granted to non-CARICOM countries which have established functional cooperation programmes with the Community and those institutions that contribute to the work of the COHSOD, subject to the Rules of Procedure of the COHSOD and in the spirit of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas as well as the Declaration of Needham's Point, Barbados (July 2007), for functional cooperation as a vehicle for a " Community For All."

The COHSOD approved the conferring of Observer Status in the COHSOD on the Netherlands Antilles, Guadeloupe and the Caribbean Studies Association with immediate effect.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The COHSOD accepted with appreciation the offer of Suriname to host its Seventeenth Meeting early in 2008.

LAUNCH OF CARIFESTA X

The COHSOD participated in the launch of CARIFESTA X, which is to be hosted by Guyana on 22–31 August 2008 under the theme, One Caribbean, One Purpose – Our Life, Our Culture.

It received with pleasure the detailed information provided by Guyana on its preparations for hosting this premiere regional cultural event as well as indications of the commitment by some Member States and other countries in the Caribbean of their participation.

The COHSOD lauded the logo for CARIFESTA X which was unveiled during Guyana's presentation.

CLOSING

The COHSOD expressed its thanks to the Government and People of Guyana for their warm hospitality and the Secretary-General and Staff of the CARICOM Secretariat for the arrangements and effort made which had ensured the success of the Meeting.

12 October 2007
Georgetown, Guyana