

Communique

Date: 1, August 2024

COMMUNIQUÉ

Forty-Seventh Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana - Thursday 1 August 2024) -

The Forty-Seventh Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was held from 28-30 July in St George's, Grenada under the chairmanship of the Honourable Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada.

The Meeting was rescheduled from the previously announced date of 3 -5 July, due to Hurricane Beryl, which impacted eight Member States and Associate Members.

Members of the Conference in attendance were: Honourable Gaston Browne (virtual) Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda; Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados; Honourable Roosevelt Skerritt, Prime Minister of Dominica; Honourable Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada; His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of Guyana; Senator Edgard Leblanc Fils, President of the Transitional Presidential Council of Haiti; Honourable Philip Pierre, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia; Dr the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; His Excellency Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of Suriname; and Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Honourable Glenys Hanna-Martin, Minister of Education and Technical and Vocational Training represented The Bahamas; Honourable Francis William Fonseca, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, (virtual), represented Belize; Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson-Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade represented Jamaica; Honourable Charles Kirnon, Minister of Education, Health, Social Services, Sports, Youth and Ecclesiastical Affairs represented Montserrat; and the Honourable Geoffrey Hanley, Deputy Prime Minister, represented St Kitts and Nevis.

Associate Member States represented were Bermuda, by the Honourable Walter Roban, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs; the British Virgin Islands, by Premier, Dr. the Honourable Natalio D. Wheatley; Curaçao by His Excellency Gilmar Pisas, Prime Minister; and the Turks and Caicos Islands, by the Honourable Arlington Alexander Musgrove, Minister of Immigration and Border Services.

OPENING CEREMONY

CARICOM Secretary General, Dr Carla Barnett, welcomed the Community and guests to the Opening Ceremony at Charter Hall, St George's University.

The Secretary-General acknowledged Grenada's courage and determination in hosting the Meeting despite the recent devastation caused by Hurricane Beryl. She noted the significant role played by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) in relief and recovery efforts as an example of the critical role of CARICOM institutions in deepening integration.

"We have taken notable steps towards realising some of the main tenets of the Grand Anse Declaration signed on this soil in July 1989," the Secretary-General said. "As our countries reinforce resilience and growth, it is critical that this Forty-Seventh Regular Meeting advances discussions and decisions intrinsic to the objectives of CARICOM integration."

Outgoing Chair, His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, highlighted several CARICOM accomplishments due to inter-regional cooperation, such as improvements in food and nutrition security, advancements in restoring peaceful governance in Haiti, managing natural disasters and efforts to revitalize West Indies cricket.

"There is no stronger voice on climate change and reform of the financial system to bring climate justice to Small Island Developing States than the voices of the Caribbean," he pointed out.

Chairman of the Conference, the Honourable Dickon Mitchell, expressed appreciation for the significant support he received from CARICOM Member States in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl. He underscored the increasingly devastating impact of climate change on the Region. "We are not exaggerating the impact. The stark reality is that we may not have a country to pass on to future generations, and that is why CARICOM will not fail to advocate for climate justice," he said.

Admission of Curacao, Sixth Associate Member

In keeping with the Decision of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM taken at its Thirty-Eighth Inter-Sessional Meeting held in Caucus on 4 June 2024, Curaçao was formally admitted as an Associate Member of CARICOM during the opening ceremony.

The Agreement was signed by the Chairman of CARICOM and the Prime Minister of Curaçao, His Excellency Gilmar Pisas.

“As we embark on this new chapter, we are committed to contributing to and benefitting from the synergies that CARICOM membership offers,” Prime Minister Pisas said.

Conferral of the Order of the Caribbean Community

A highlight of the Opening Ceremony was the conferral of the Region’s highest honour, the Order of the Caribbean Community (OCC), on West Indian cricketer extraordinaire, Sir Clive Lloyd of Guyana, and former CARICOM Secretary-General, the Honourable Roderick Rainford, OJ , of Jamaica.

Both were lauded for their sterling contributions to the Region.

The opening ceremony can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rJDPvMudpg>

Presentations are available via :

<https://caricom.org/47hgc/> and

<https://caricom.org/remarks-by-dr-carla-barnett-secretary-general-of-the-caribbean-community-at-the-opening-ceremony-of-the-forty-seventh-regular-meeting-of-the-conference-of-heads-of-government-of-the-caribbean-communi/>

CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)

The Hon Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and Lead Head of Government for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) reported that progress has been made in updating the Common External Tarriff and Rules of Origin Regimes, developing model laws to support the harmonisation of business laws and promote mutual recognition. She recognised the ongoing work to address competition policy in the Community through the possible dual function role of the CARICOM Competition Commission (CCC), and the progress made a draft regional industrial policy.

THE CARICOM AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS AGENDA- FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Lead Head of Government for Agriculture and Food Security, reported that the Region was realising measured progress in its efforts towards regional food and nutrition security, with the April 2024 CARICOM/World Food Programme Livelihood Survey indicating a 17% reduction in food insecurity. It was noted that by the first quarter of 2024, CARICOM Member States had recorded a 30% achievement of targets set and a 12% decline in real imports, equal to a quarter of a billion dollars. He also noted that these achievements were before Hurricane Beryl which devastated the agriculture sector of the affected states and damage assessments were ongoing. Early estimates are that the passage of Hurricane Beryl has resulted in losses to the Region's agriculture sector (excluding fisheries) of some US\$159.3 million.

The Meeting noted the development of a Regional Youth in Agriculture Strategy and the launch of the Regional Economic Agri-Insurance Programme (REAP) on 26 July 2024, as positive steps toward building resilience and production.

Heads of Government urged regional financial institutions to provide a special programme of support to the agriculture stakeholders and enterprises towards recovery and rehabilitation of the sector. They also agreed to the adoption of a regional resilient Farmstead- Shadehouse Model geared towards the economic improvement of rural family farms. This model is adaptable to the specific circumstances of particular Member States.

STRATEGY FOR REGIONAL DIGITAL RESILIENCE 2025 – 2030

As part of a strategy for Regional Digital Resilience presented by Prime Minister Mitchell, Chairman of the Conference, and Lead Head on Science and Technology (including Information and Communications), the Conference agreed to establish a CARICOM Digital Skills Training and Learning Network (CDSTLD), and to launch the Digi-Smart CARICOM Digital Skills Initiative in 2024.

They also agreed to undertake a regional project to train CARICOM citizens in key areas such as Artificial Intelligence and data analytics.

Additional activities under the Strategy will include establishment of the Cybersecurity and Resilience Information Sharing Framework at IMPACS; launch of a telemedicine pilot in three CARICOM Member States; commissioning of a CARICOM Digital Health Strategy; and the establishment of an Artificial Intelligence Centre of Excellence in Grenada.

DEVELOPMENTS IN REGIONAL AIR AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

The Meeting received an update on the notable improvements in airlift to, from and within the Region, including the operationalization of LIAT 2020 with provision of jet services.

Heads of Government agreed to host a Regional Symposium on Air Transport in Barbados by the first quarter of 2025, under the theme “Building cooperation for the further development of Regional Civil Aviation”.

The Symposium will provide International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) training programmes to industry personnel, and will address regulatory, operational, safety, security, and gender issues in the sector.

Heads of Government received a status report on the Intra-Regional Passenger/Cargo Ferry Service between Barbados, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, on which actions are far advanced.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTANABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Conference noted the urgency for the Region to engage in high-level political advocacy to continue to reiterate the Region’s position on Climate Change; advocate for urgent action across the climate agenda; emphasise the vulnerability of SIDS; and deliver a robust climate finance goal at COP 29.

They called for the Loss and Damage Fund to address scale and responsiveness, the two issues which are most critical for SIDS.

They agreed that CARICOM Member States will each deliver a unified statement at COP29, and convene a Donor's Conference on the margins of COP 29.

Hurricane Beryl and its Aftermath

The Conference received an update from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) on the relief and recovery support given to the Region by Member States, regional institutions and international agencies. Eight CARICOM Member States and Associate Members were impacted by the hurricane. There was significant damage to housing stock and other critical infrastructure in some countries, and to the agriculture and fisheries sectors. The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) also presented an update on its post-disaster health response noting the rising risks to public health, including from vector borne diseases, from climate change and resulting extreme weather events.

Heads of Government have established a CARICOM Sub-Committee to develop a strategy towards financing for recovery from the hurricane. They agreed to regional cooperation to advance the recommendations of the sub-committee.

They noted that all future regional insurance schemes should be realistic and reflective of the realities of the CARICOM Region. The Conference requested an examination of parametric insurance and called for a special meeting of Finance Ministers with the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Segregated Portfolio Company (CCRIF) to discuss models and products suitable for the Region.

Message from the Minister Mukhtar Babayev President of COP 29 (Virtual)

In his video message, the Minister for Ecology and Natural Resources of the Azerbaijan Republic and President-Designate of COP 29 noted that as host, Azerbaijan is committed to ensuring that SIDS experiences, challenges and concerns are at the centre of discussions during COP 29 scheduled for 11 – 22 November.

He further noted that the commitments of his Presidency are to enhance ambitions with clear plans on how to keep 1.5 degrees with reach; and create the conditions to shape the global financial architecture to deliver for people and the planet.

ENGAGEMENT WITH SPECIAL GUEST (VIRTUAL)

Right Honourable Patricia Scotland, KC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

In her video message, the Secretary General noted that CARICOM has been central to the process which has reestablished the Commonwealth as a powerful force for good. She said the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Apia, Samoa on 21 October 2024 will examine debt and reform of the global financial architecture, urgent action needed at COP 29, and will put forward a new oceans declaration.

The Conference expressed appreciation to Baroness Scotland for the work accomplished during her leadership of the Commonwealth Secretariat, particularly the continued focus on seeking to address the needs and concerns of small states.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT (UN PFPAD)

Her Excellency Dr. June Soomer, Chair

Dr. June Soomer updated the Conference on the work of the Permanent Forum and proposed opportunities for strategic engagement and partnership between the Forum and the Community.

Heads of Government noted the important role played by the Permanent Forum. They endorsed Dr Soomer's recommendations for increased engagement between the UNPFPAD and relevant arms of CARICOM to advance a programme of joint advocacy, including on reparations.

They reiterated their call for support to the Permanent Forum's campaign for the United Nations to proclaim a second International Decade for People of African Descent.

ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR, LABOUR, CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUTH

The Conference received presentations from the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO), Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL), Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) and the CARICOM Youth Ambassador corps (CYA). They noted the ongoing work towards establishing an appropriate mechanism to ensure adequate consultation with them for more inclusive decision-making in the Region.

They also noted the valuable contributions by CARICOM Youth Ambassadors and other youth, and underscored the need for the enhanced involvement of young people in regional development efforts.

HEALTH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (HeDPAC)

The Partnership is a South-South collaboration effort initiated by Barbados, Guyana and Rwanda to address pressing health challenges in Africa and the Caribbean. This includes health-related issues of the climate crisis. The HeDPAC initiative has three main priorities: to mitigate the difficulties faced by the health workforce of the Africa and Caribbean regions, including education, employment, deployment, retention, and performance; to build resilient health systems capable of withstanding emerging threats; and to promote the local manufacturing of medical products, including vaccines, to manage the gaps identified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Partnership could also be leveraged to improve knowledge exchanges between Africa and the Caribbean, to enhance regulatory capacity for medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and to facilitate the free movement of CARICOM nationals within the Community through advancing the digitalization of health information systems.

All Member States are invited to partner with HeDPAC to leverage sustainable health development and capacity building through political, technical, and scientific collaboration between the Regions.

BORDER ISSUES

Belize- Guatemala

Heads of Government received an update on the Belize – Guatemala and the Belize – Honduras cases before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and commended the Parties for seeking a peaceful resolution to all legal claims against Belize's land and insular territories and any maritime areas pertaining to those territories. They called on all Parties to abide by and implement the ICJ decision when delivered.

The Conference expressed concern over the continued illegal activities by Guatemalan nationals in Belizean territory along the Belize – Guatemala border and called on the Guatemalan Government to dissuade its nationals, in accordance with the Confidence Building Measures signed in 2005, from

entering Belizean territory. They called on both governments to work together to confront illicit activities along the Belize – Guatemala border by organizing joint patrols with the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS).

They commended the work carried out by the OAS in reducing tensions and building good neighbourly relations between Belize and Guatemala and urged the international community to continue their support for the operations of the OAS office, whose work will continue to be critical including after the ICJ decision.

Guyana- Venezuela

Heads of Government received an update on recent developments in Guyana/Venezuela relations.

They noted that despite the 1 December 2023 Order of Provisional Measures made by the International Court of Justice and the Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace between Guyana and Venezuela, and agreed by the parties on 14 December 2023, with support from CARICOM and CELAC, Venezuela continued its aggressive posture towards Guyana. They noted that following the promulgation of the organic law by the Government of Venezuela on 3 April 2024 to annex more than two-thirds of Guyana's territory, Guyana brought this matter to the attention of the United Nations Security Council which reminded both parties that they were obligated to comply with the Order of the Court.

Heads of Government took note of the concerns raised by Guyana that the continued military build-up by Venezuela on the border between the countries poses a threat to regional peace and security.

Heads welcomed the submission by Venezuela on 8 April 2024, of its Counter-Memorial to the Court and the Court Order dated 14 June 2024, authorising the submission of a Reply by Guyana on 9 December 2024 and a Rejoinder by Venezuela on 11 August 2025. They reiterated their continued support for the International Court of Justice, which has accepted jurisdiction over the controversy, to resolve it fully and finally by means of its binding legal Judgment.

They reaffirmed CARICOM's unswerving support for the maintenance and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

THE SITUATION IN HAITI

The Conference welcomed the report by the President of the newly established Transitional Presidential Council and recognised the appointment of a Prime Minister and a new Cabinet. The Conference noted the significant role played by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) in the process.

Heads of Government noted the arrival in Haiti of some 400 security personnel from Kenya in support of the Multi-national Security Support Mission authorised by the UN Security Council, as well the shortfall in financing for the deployment of Security Support personnel from CARICOM Member States.

They expressed great concern at the dire humanitarian situation, characterised by acute food insecurity, and reiterated their commitment to support Haiti through its transition process and beyond, including through continued support of the Eminent Persons Group.

CUBA

Heads of Government registered their concern at the growing humanitarian crisis in Cuba occasioned by the ongoing embargo issued by the United States of America and issued a Statement of solidarity with Cuba.

The Statement can be accessed via: <https://caricom.org/statement-from-the-caribbean-community-on-cuba/>

CRIME AND SECURITY

Heads of Government received a security brief from the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and issued a Statement on Crime and Violence.

The Statement can be accessed via: <https://caricom.org/statement-from-the-caribbean-community-on-crime-and-violence/>

APPRECIATION

Heads of Government expressed their appreciation to Dr Joy St John, who ended her tenure as Executive Director of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) on 30 June 2024.

Heads of Government also expressed appreciation to Assistant Secretary General (ASG) Economic Integration, Innovation and Development, Mr Joseph Cox who was leaving the CARICOM Secretariat after serving three terms as ASG.

The Conference also expressed appreciation to the Government and People of Grenada for their excellent hospitality and courtesies as host of the meeting.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

Heads of Government accepted the invitation of Barbados to host the 48th Regular Meeting of the Conference from 20 – 21 February 2025.

STATEMENTS

The Conference issued the following Statements:

Statement on Crime and Violence

We, CARICOM Heads of Government are deeply concerned by the levels of crime and violence in the Region, fueled in part, by firearms and ammunition trafficking, transnational criminal networks, and a deterioration of social structures. We are also particularly concerned about the impact of crime and violence on young people and children.

We reiterate our commitment to ongoing urgent action to protect the citizens of the Region and to the safety, security and preservation of public interest in dealing with crime and violence, including through the sharing of information and the strengthening of legislation in respect of firearms offences, violent crime and bail. We further recognize the value of restorative justice, social and cultural interventions and intolerance of corruption, in achieving long- term social change.

We commit to the strengthening and increased use of existing regional mechanisms and institutions to address crime and security, including the CARICOM IMPACS Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre and the urgent exploration of new approaches to combatting high levels of criminality.

CARICOM recognises the importance of the April 2023 Regional Symposium on Crime and Security as a Public Health Issue hosted by Trinidad and Tobago and welcomes the offer by Barbados to host a second Symposium before the end of 2024.

Ongoing regional and national collaboration are critical to addressing the multifaceted challenges to crime and violence which threaten modern Caribbean society. We call on all CARICOM citizens to be part of the solution by reporting crimes and by refusing to support criminal activity, recognising that crime and violence affects us all.

St. George's, Grenada

30 July 2024

Statement on Cuba

The Forty-Seventh (47th) Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community is gravely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Cuba resulting from the embargo wrongfully imposed on the people and Government of Cuba over the last 62 years by the Government of the United States of America.

The Conference reiterates its call for the lifting of the unjust unilateral financial, economic, and trade embargo.

In light of the depth of the humanitarian situation, CARICOM Heads of Government agreed to provide material support to assist Cuba.

CARICOM considers the US State Department's ongoing inclusion of Cuba on its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism as wrong and offensive. The Conference reiterates its call for Cuba to be immediately removed from this list.

St. George's, Grenada

30 July 2024

1 August 2024

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