



Press Release



Antigua and Barbuda – The Bahamas – Barbados – Belize – Dominica – Grenada – Guyana – Haiti – Jamaica – Montserrat – St. Kitts and Nevis – Saint Lucia – St. Vincent and the Grenadines – Suriname – Trinidad and Tobago

No. 49/2004

Date: 27 March 2004

(CARICOM Secretariat, Georgetown, Guyana) The revised Communiqué attached, replaces Press Release Nos. 47/2004 and 48/2004 on the Conclusion of the Fifteenth Inter-sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis, 25-26 March 2004.

COMMUNIQUE

FIFTEENTH INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

**BASSETERRE, ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
25-26 MARCH 2004**

The Fifteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community was held in Basseterre, St Kitts and Nevis on 25-26 March 2004. The Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, the Hon Dr Denzil Douglas presided over the Meeting of the Conference.

Heads of Government of Member States in attendance were: The Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt Hon Owen Arthur; the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, the Hon Perry Christie; the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr the Hon Keith Mitchell; His Excellency the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Mr Bharrat Jagdeo; the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Most Hon P.J. Patterson; the Chief Minister of Montserrat, the Hon John Osborne; the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr the Hon Kenny Anthony; the Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr the Hon Ralph Gonsalves; His Excellency the President of the Republic of Suriname, Dr Rinaldo Venetiaan; and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Hon Patrick Manning.

Heads of Government of Associate Members in attendance were: the Hon. Walter Scott, Premier of Bermuda and the Hon Dr Michael Misick, Chief Minister of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Belize was represented by Attorney-General and Minister of Foreign Trade, the Hon Eamon Courtenay; Antigua was represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon Harold Lovell.

Statements

In welcoming the Heads of Government and delegates, the Secretary-General recognised "that this meeting is taking place at a time when there are unmistakable signs of stresses and strains in our Community." The Secretary-General pointed out that

2

it was not by chance that CARICOM was “the longest surviving integration grouping among developing countries.”

He alluded to the progress being made on many fronts by the Community as a Community in the field of trade, economics and law and added “we must have “boundless faith in our destiny.”

The outgoing Chairman of the Community, the Most Honourable Percival J Patterson, in his statement, pointed out that though the Caribbean Community Member States might be small in size and made no claim to military power “our influence in the hemisphere cannot be underestimated.”

In that context, the Prime Minister said, “I do not believe there will be a lasting and permanent solution to the problems in Haiti unless CARICOM is involved and allowed to make a meaningful contribution. Nothing can be achieved without our collective support and without the single vision we have always had for the Region’s development and the maintenance of CARICOM’s integrity.”

The Prime Minister said that in moving forward with renewed commitment, no effort must be spared “to engage every citizen of the Community as a full partner in our endeavours. It is ultimately through their full participation and sense of ownership that our success will be eventually assured.”

The Chairman of the meeting, host Prime Minister the Honourable Dr Denzil Douglas, in his statement, said that the Community owed it to the people of Haiti to do “all we can to ensure that they enjoy the peace, security and good governance which we have enjoyed for so long in this Community.”

Dr Douglas pointed out that the issue of regional security was very important. “We cannot take any of these security issues for granted, rather we must actively pursue, develop and implement strategies and programmes to significantly reduce the risks to our Region. Perhaps the point cannot be brought home any more clearly than the need for top notch security for the upcoming Cricket World Cup Series in 2007.”

He urged that the meeting be used to “rededicate ourselves to the ideals of regionalism, to resolve our differences with integrity, and move to expedite the common ideals of the Caribbean People in this Caribbean Community.”

International Meeting on the Ten-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Heads of Government recalled that when the small island developing states met in Barbados in 1994 at the first global conference on Sustainable Development, it was in recognition of the fact that SIDS displayed particular development challenges.

They also recalled that emerging from that conference was the Barbados Programme of Action, which was the platform for the sustainable development of SDS.

They noted that the International Meeting on the Ten-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is scheduled to take place in Mauritius on 30 August to 3 September 2004.

They welcomed the undertaking by the Prime Minister of Belize, Hon. Said Musa, Lead Head of Government with responsibility for Sustainable Development, to spearhead the Region's participation at the international meeting.

Heads of Government also agreed to invite high-level United Nations Representatives, including the Secretary-General of the International Meeting and Under Secretary-General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, landlocked Developing Countries and SIDS, Mr Anwarul K. Chowdry, and the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr Klaus Toepfer to brief Heads of Government at the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Conference in July.

US-CARICOM Relations

Meeting with the US Secretary for Homeland Security

Heads of Government agreed that the Community should continue in its endeavours to engage the Government of the USA on issues of mutual interest such as security, crime, the continued deportation of criminals, border security, maritime cooperation and justice-related matters, as well as the global war on terrorism.

Heads of Government welcomed the positive response by the US to hold discussions with CARICOM countries on security issues, at Ministerial level. They requested Trinidad and Tobago whose Prime Minister has lead responsibility for Security, to initiate action for the convening at the earliest opportunity of such a meeting between a team of Ministers of National Security and US Secretary for Homeland Security, Mr Tom Ridge.

Association of Caribbean States

Heads of Government noted that the Fourth Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) had been postponed from 13-14 February 2004 to a date yet to be determined.

Having reviewed the operation of the ACS over its first ten years, Heads of Government agreed that CARICOM Members of the ACS Ministerial Council should indicate to that body their view that the ACS Secretariat should operate as was originally envisaged, as a "Secretariat of Secretariats" and thus not duplicate the efforts of other sub-regional organizations, with emphasis being placed on the promotion of effective cooperation in the Greater Caribbean.

Heads of Government welcomed the election of H.E Dr Ruben Sile of the Dominican Republic as the Secretary-General of the ACS. They extended their best wishes and offered the Region's support to the Secretary-General for a successful term of office.

The Conference paid tribute to Dr. Norman Girvan, a national of Jamaica whose term of office as Secretary-General of the ACS had come to an end, for his contribution to the work of the Association. Heads of Government extended their best wishes to him in his new endeavours.

The Situation in Haiti

Heads of Government discussed this matter in Caucus. A declaration is **attached**.

Governance

Heads of Government requested the Prime Ministerial Expert Group on Governance to continue its work with a view to submitting recommendations to the Conference for final decision at its regular meeting in July.

CARICOM Single Market and Economy

Very conscious that for at least three countries – Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago – 2004 will mark the completion of the introduction of the basic key elements for the establishment of the CSME, the Conference noted that dedicated attention would be required by all Member States in the effort to meet the 2004/2005 deadlines for the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market.

Progress is evident in the establishment of the legal base for the CSME in that a number of Member States are at the stage of ensuring that the Revised Treaty is enshrined in their domestic legislation.

There is now provision for free movement of graduates, media workers, musicians, artistes and sportspersons in all Member States except Antigua and Barbuda and St Kitts and Nevis.

With respect to the removal of restrictions for the creation of a Single Market for establishing enterprises, providing services and moving capital, Trinidad and Tobago has met its 2003 commitments while Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana and St Vincent and the Grenadines have gone part of the way. A number of Member States have indicated that they are now treating their 2003 and 2004 commitments as a package for removal in 2004.

The Conference has agreed that the outstanding matters regarding the facilitation of intra-regional travel in an environment of heightened security considerations and the introduction of a CARICOM Passport would be concluded at its Twenty-Fifth Meeting in

5

July 2004. In the meanwhile, all but two Member States have arrangements at their Immigration points of entry for the common treatment of host country nationals and other CARICOM nationals.

The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)

Heads of Government received a status update on the CCJ. They noted that the process towards inaugurating the CCJ was at a very crucial stage, in particular that Member States had already enacted the necessary legislation and that recommendations from the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission (RJLSC) regarding the Presidency of the Court and the posts of six judges were being finalized. Appointments are expected to be made by the end of May 2004.

Heads of Government also noted the effective functioning of the Board of Trustees. They further noted that the Board was elaborating the investment guidelines and financial regulations for approval by Members and had identified a short list of candidates for the post of Chief Executive Officer. They further noted that all but one Member State had signed the Supplementary Loan Agreement with the CDB.

Heads of Government directed that structures involved in preparations of the inauguration - the Preparatory Committee and the High-Level Task Force – should work in consultation with the RJLSC and the lead Prime Minister for Justice and Security to finalise arrangements for the inauguration of the Court by the third quarter of 2004.

Agriculture and Regional Development

Strengthening Regional Agriculture for Sustainable Growth and Development

Heads of Government discussed the continued political and multifunctional role of agriculture in the social and economic development of several CARICOM Member States and expressed deep concern at the many challenges confronting the sector at this time.

They welcomed the initiative of the President of Guyana, as lead Head of Government for Agriculture, to organize a strategic plan to stimulate diversification and raise the production and productivity of the sector.

They also requested the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) to identify a list of the sensitive agricultural products of the Region. Heads of Government mandated the Region's external negotiators to ensure that the products so identified are appropriately treated in all the negotiations being undertaken by the Region.

Heads of Government noted the multi-faceted nature of agriculture and the adverse internal and external conditions facing the sector and agreed on the need for a strategic plan to raise agricultural production and productivity in the Region.

They also noted that the President of Guyana, in his role as lead Head of Government for Agriculture, had already requested and received positive responses from the FAO and IICA for their assistance in developing a strategic plan.

They urged the completion of the strategic plan in time for consideration at the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Conference in July 2004.

Heads of Government instructed the Region's external negotiators – in the WTO and the various FTAs – to be sensitive to the rate at which the Region commits to the liberalisation of its agricultural sector and, in particular, its most sensitive agricultural products.

Sugar

Heads of Government reiterated the vital importance of the sugar industry as the largest agricultural enterprise in CARICOM. In this regard, they emphasized the importance of preserving access to the European Union market for sugar at current levels of tonnage and value. They agreed that, in light of the multiple and growing challenges to the current European Union Sugar Regime, under which CARICOM enjoys access to the EU sugar market and, taking account of the review of the commodity protocols in the context of the new trading arrangements, the Region would intensify representation to ensure that the value of the Sugar Protocol is maintained. Heads of Government endorsed steps to be taken to retain and improve access to the United States sugar market and agreed on the necessity of maximizing the utilization of the CARICOM market for sugar by CARICOM sugar producers at remunerative prices. In this regard, Heads of Government emphasized the need for the urgent establishment of sugar refining capacity in the Region, sufficient to meet its requirements.

Bananas

Heads of Government were extremely disturbed at the disastrous turn of events with respect to the marketing of bananas and the consequent drop in earnings of banana exports following the implementation of the European Union Banana Import Regime in 2001. They recalled that the international community, including the European Union and the United States of America, had ignored all their counsel during the negotiation for the revision of the Banana Regime that the market would collapse with calamitous effects on the economies of small banana producing countries.

Heads of Government expressed concern that arrangements for the accession of the ten (10) new members of the European Union and the introduction of the tariff only system in 2006 would exacerbate this already unbearable market situation, if they are not designed to take account of the sensitivity of the market.

They urged the international community, in particular the European Union and the United States, to weigh carefully the impact of any further change in the regime on the

economic, social and security conditions of the banana dependent economies in the Caribbean.

International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) Code

Heads of Government discussed the readiness of the Region to meet the deadline of 1 July 2004 established for the implementation of the International Ship and Port Security Facility (ISPS) Code. They welcomed the efforts of Member States to ensure implementation of the Code by that date. They expressed appreciation to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for the technical services, which it continues to provide to the Region in the area of maritime, and port security matters. They also expressed appreciation to the Port Management Association of the Caribbean; the Caribbean Shipping Association; the Caribbean/Central America Action and the Florida Ports Council for the support provided to ensure timely implementation of the requirements necessary.

They further welcomed the matching grant from USAID and the US\$25,000 from Florida Ports Council towards the matching funds.

Heads of Government reiterated their commitment to work together to ensure that the entire Region meets its obligations.

Regional Transportation Issues

Heads of Government received a Report from Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, lead Head of Government for Air Transportation issues in the Community, on the current situation of LIAT and state of the proposal for the formation of a Single Air Carrier.

Heads of Government agreed that every effort will be made on a collaborative approach to resolve the current problems and to establish a viable regional airline network to include BWIA.

Community Access to Regional Natural Resources Progress on the Work of the Task Force on Energy

The Conference received a progress report from the Task Force on Energy which focused on three key issues, namely, the expanded legal opinion on access to energy resources; the joint procurement and processing of crude petroleum; and a study on rationalization of the regional energy sector.

Heads of Government, noting the complexity of the energy issue and the urgent necessity for an acceptable regional policy and legal framework, mandated the Secretary-General to establish a mechanism to secure a clear decision/conclusion of the legal issues by the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Conference in July 2004.

8

Heads of Government noted and encouraged the Task Force to advance with urgency its work on the rationalization of the regional energy sector and the joint procurement and processing of crude petroleum.

The Issue of a Common Regional Fisheries Regime

Heads of Government endorsed the elaboration of a Common Regional Fisheries Regime independent and separate from and without prejudice to the settlement of maritime boundary disputes between and among Member States and Third Parties.

They also requested the COTED (Agriculture) to review the Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on the Common Fisheries Regime held in Trinidad and Tobago in June 2003, with a view to submitting recommendations to the Conference, at the earliest opportunity.

Fiscal, Monetary and Financial Issues and Stabilisation and Transformation

Stabilisation and Transformation of Caribbean Economies

Heads of Government discussed developments relating to the Programme for the Stabilisation and Transformation of Caribbean Economies, which they had formulated in Saint Lucia at their Special Conference of 16 August 2002.

With respect to the special programme for Dominica, the Meeting noted that the country had made some progress towards economic stabilization and recovery and it was projected that it might possibly achieve this year a one per cent to two per cent growth, albeit from a depressed income base. Member States and regional and international financial institutions were called upon to continue to provide financial support and technical assistance to Dominica so as to help ensure that its recovery is sustained.

Concerning the programme for the Caribbean as a whole, Member States reached a consensus that there was not sufficient enthusiasm shown for the Regional Stabilization Fund (RSF), despite nearly two years of effort to develop the concept and mobilize resources for same. Appreciation was shown for the earlier commitment of US\$45M by Trinidad and Tobago were the RSF to come into existence. Since the RSF is no longer on the cards, some Member States felt that Trinidad and Tobago should be encouraged to convert the US\$45M into an initial contribution to some other mechanism, for example the Development Fund for Disadvantaged Countries, Regions and Sectors. In this regard, the Meeting was informed that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would be willing to have its newly created US\$16M – Trinidad and Tobago – CARICOM Trade Facility incorporated into the Regional Development Fund, when the latter is up and running.

Crime and Security

The lead Prime Minister for Crime and Security made a [power point] presentation to the Meeting detailing the major issues arising out of the Report of the CARICOM Task Force on Crime and Security (2002) and the priorities established by the Ministerial Sub-Committee established at the Conference (July 2003) for Resource Mobilisation for crime and security. The major priorities include a regional information and intelligence sharing mechanism, border security enhancement, regional maritime cooperation, a regional rapid response mechanism – all forming core elements of an indigenous regional security strategy. These were the priorities at the forum of the CARICOM-UK Consultation on Crime and Security in March 2004, following on the breakfast Meeting between Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and CARICOM Prime Ministers in December 2003. They will again be the subject of the UK-Caribbean Forum in the United Kingdom in May 2004 and the meeting with USA Homeland Security.

Heads of Government agreed to extend the life of the CARICOM Regional Task Force on Crime and Security and expressed gratitude to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for its continued support for the Secretariat of the Task Force. It was also agreed that the Coordinating Information Management Authority (CIMA) be established as soon as possible to develop the protocols for the regional information sharing mechanism. This is especially important in view of the impending implementation of the CSME and of CWC 2007.

HIV/AIDS

The Pan-Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS

Heads of Government welcomed the news that the World Bank, at its Board Meeting of 25 March 2004, had approved a US\$9M grant to CARICOM/PANCAP for HIV/AIDS programmes in care and treatment, human rights and stigma reduction for PLWA and prevention. This follows a series of support from donor agencies including grants totaling US\$40M to the Caribbean from the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria over the next two years with a projected US\$112M over five years.

Heads of Government also noted that Dr. Carol Jacobs, Director of the NAP, Barbados has been appointed to the Board of the GFATM as the Latin American and Caribbean representative.

Heads of Government welcomed the initiatives by PANCAP and Guyana in collaboration with other partners to pursue cheaper anti-retroviral drugs and increase its availability to PLWA.

The Heads of Government commended the work of the Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, the Head of Government with responsibility for Health, Human Resources and HIV/Aids in the CARICOM quasi-cabinet arrangements.

External Trade Negotiations

Heads of Government recognized that *inter alia* political developments, entrenched positions on agriculture, and lack of empathy in the negotiating stance of developed countries, have made it difficult to resolve certain issues at the multilateral and hemispheric levels. They emphasised that the present impasse should not induce complacency but should be viewed as an opportunity to review the Region's strategies for achieving its fundamental developmental objectives in the external negotiations.

Developing countries in all theatres of negotiations must reinforce their demands by bringing greater specificity to their proposals. In this regard, the Region will continue to strengthen its strategic alliances and in particular with other developing countries.

With regard to the WTO negotiations, Heads of Government declared that the Region would continue to be active in the efforts to re-launch the negotiations. In so doing, the Region would review its strategies, in order to continue the pursuit of its priorities, such as special and differential treatment for smaller economies.

With regard to the FTAA, Heads of Government noted that delays had jeopardized the existing schedule for the conclusion of the negotiations. However, they remain convinced that it is worth expending extra time and effort to ensure the desired outcome – an agreement that promotes economic development, particularly for countries such as those of the Caribbean Community. Heads of Government repeated their call for the establishment of a regional integration fund and also committed themselves to maintaining the vigour of their campaign for Trinidad and Tobago to be the site of the permanent FTAA secretariat.

Heads of Government reviewed preparations for the launch of negotiations with the European Union for a Regional Economic Partnership Agreement on 16 April 2004 in Jamaica. They emphasised that the eventual Agreement must make a meaningful contribution to Caribbean development and not merely be an instrument to govern trade with the European Union in the future. They delegated authority to Trade Ministers meeting in Jamaica prior to the launch of the negotiations to finalise discussions and agree on the CARIFORUM structure, the overall plan and schedule, as well as the approach to be taken to preparations for the various stages of the negotiations.

Upcoming Meetings of Major Importance to the Region

Heads of Government noted that the European Union-Latin America Summit will take place in the format of Working Round Tables on 28 May and will concentrate on multilateralism and social cohesion.

Heads of Government expressed satisfaction at the level of interaction, which had taken place between the UK and the Region as a follow-up to the Meeting held at the level of Government in London on 2 December 2003.

They endorsed the proposal advanced by the Rt. Hon. George Foulkes for a UK-Caribbean Parliamentary Forum, which is expected to facilitate a free flowing exchange of views on the problems facing the Region.

2007 Cricket World Cup

Heads of Government received the reports from the Chief Executive Officer of the CWC 2007 Inc, the President of the WICB and the chairman of the Technical Advisory Group. They agreed that the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Cricket should be revised to comprise all countries that offered bids for hosting the Cricket World Cup 2007, including The Bahamas, Bermuda and Trinidad and Tobago and this sub-committee will be chaired by Grenada. It was also agreed that adequate provision be made for TAG to function effectively and for a meeting of LOCs and the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Cricket be convened to deal with the major issues related to profit-sharing and a collaborative approach to the implementation of CWC 2007.

Establishment of the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN)

Heads of Government received the presentation on the establishment of the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN) by Mr. Ken Sylvester, Project Coordinator.

They endorsed the project as a crucial step in building the capacity of the people of the Region and requested the Secretary-General to identify funding sources for its implementation.

Heads of Government agreed to the nomination of two persons of the Governance Committee of the Project, namely, Ambassador Lolita Applewhaite, Deputy Secretary-General and Ms. Camille Rhone, Director, Caribbean Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ).

They further directed that there be collaboration on the various ICT initiatives being undertaken in the Region to take advantage of economies of scale and to ensure compatibility.

Update on Belize-Guatemala Relations

The Heads of Government received an update on the current process of negotiations towards a settlement of the Belize Guatemala Border dispute.

They reiterated their total support for Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Guatemala's unfounded and anachronistic claim to Belizean territory.

The Heads of Government recalled that a new Government of Guatemala was installed in January of this year, and expressed the hope that it will abide by the international

agreement entered into with Belize and the Organization of American States (OAS) on the 7th February 2003.

They articulated their conviction that this “Agreement to Establish a Transition Process and Confidence Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala” which includes the active participation on the ground of the General Secretariat of the OAS, represents the best option for a just, equitable and permanent solution of the territorial dispute and urged both to abide strictly by its provisions in good faith.

Guyana/Venezuela Relations

Heads of Government noted with satisfaction the further development of cordial and cooperative relations between Guyana and Venezuela as a result of the recently concluded visit in Guyana of the Venezuelan President His Excellency Hugo Chavez

They also noted that the visit had reaffirmed the determination of both countries to continue the search for a peaceful settlement of the controversy under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

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.

Date and Venue of the Twenty-Fifth Regular Meeting

The Twenty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Conference will take place on 3-6 July 2004 in Grenada.

Appreciation

Heads of Government expressed great appreciation to the Government and people of St Kitts and Nevis for hosting the meeting at such short notice and for the excellent arrangements put in place.

STATEMENT ON HAITI

Heads of Government meeting at the Fifteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference in Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis, carefully considered the developments in Haiti since their special Emergency Meeting in Jamaica in March 2004. They also considered issues related to the representation of Haiti within the Community and the modalities for engagement between the Community and the Haitian nation.

Once again Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental principles underpinning governance and democracy in the Region and the Hemisphere, in particular those enshrined in the CARICOM Charter of Civil Society, the Summit of the Americas Declaration in Quebec City and the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Heads of Government reiterated that their commitment is to the rule of law, the democratic process and the avoidance of any interruption of that process, as occurred in Haiti.

Heads of Government reiterated their call for an investigation under the auspices of the United Nations. In the light of contradictory reports still in circulation concerning the departure of President Aristide from office, Heads of Government believed that it is in the compelling interest of the international community that the preceding events and all the circumstances surrounding the transfer of power from a constitutionally elected Head of State, be fully investigated. In this regard, they placed on record their appreciation for the support of the pursuit of this investigative process expressed by members of the international community, in particular the African Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Committee of Ambassadors.

The Fifteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference expressed its gratitude to the outgoing Chairman of CARICOM, Prime Minister the Most Hon. P.J. Patterson, for the leadership displayed in guiding the positions of the Community on the Haitian crisis and to the Government of Jamaica for granting temporary accommodation to the Aristide family.

Heads of Government reaffirmed that Haiti remains a member of the Caribbean Community and indeed a welcome partner in the regional integration movement.

Heads of Government also reaffirmed their commitment to the people of Haiti and to their social and economic well-being. The return to constitutional and representative democracy and its essential elements of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms constitute key objectives for the engagement of the Caribbean Community with Haiti.

Heads of Government emphasised the importance of holding free and fair elections to ensure a return to constitutional democracy in an acceptable time-frame. A critical aspect of such a process must permit the conduct of normal political activities. They expressed their deep concern over the continuing instability, insecurity, violence and violation of human rights in Haiti.

Heads of Government reiterated their view that there had been an interruption of the democratic process in Haiti. They recalled that in their statement of 3 March 2004, they had expressed the view that “no action should be taken to legitimize the rebel forces”. They also noted the public declarations of the head of the interim administration in Haiti, Mr. Gerard Latortue, regarding the “freezing of relations with Jamaica”, and the “putting to sleep of relations with CARICOM”. These developments had not made it possible to receive the interim administration in the Councils of the Community, so as to be afforded audience with other Heads of Government on its participation in CARICOM.

In light of the letter dated 25 March 2004 received from Mr. Latortue towards the end of their deliberations, Heads of Government agreed to review the matter at their very next Meeting in July 2004.

In the interim, Heads of Government decided to:

- (i) reconstitute the Core Group of CARICOM Prime Ministers on Haiti under the leadership of the new Chairman of CARICOM, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Hon. Baldwin Spencer;
- (ii) designate a Special Envoy as an adjunct to the Core Group to advance CARICOM's interests on issues related to Haiti; to facilitate the interface of the Caribbean Community with the interim administration of Haiti and with the international community; and to coordinate the Community's relationship with the UN, the OAS and other partners on the issue of Haiti and of its rehabilitation; and
- (iii) accept the proposals of the CARICOM Secretary-General concerning the establishment of a Task Force to co-ordinate CARICOM's assistance to Haiti in those areas where it has the capacity. The Special Envoy will work closely with the CARICOM Task Force.

Heads of Government held an exchange of views with the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General.

Heads of Government emphasised the critical importance of transparency and the fullest engagement in free, fair and open dialogue and communication in the interface between the Community's partners in the international community and itself in order to avoid misunderstandings and misperceptions.

Heads of Government appealed to the International Community to provide support and assistance for humanitarian relief, Haiti's development and the rehabilitation of its institutions.

* * * * *