



REMARKS

BY THE

**CHAIRMAN OF THE
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
DR. THE RT. HON. KEITH MITCHELL
PRIME MINISTER OF GRENADA**

**ON THE
OCCASION OF THE
SIXTH SUMMIT OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN
COMMUNITY (CARICOM) AND CUBA**

**ST. MARY'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
8 DECEMBER**

- ❖ His Excellency Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Cuba;
- ❖ Colleague Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegations of CARICOM Members,
- ❖ Secretary-General of CARICOM, Ambassador Irwin La Roque;
- ❖ Distinguished Ministers, Senators, Ambassadors to CARICOM, and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- ❖ Other Distinguished Guests;
- ❖ Delegates;
- ❖ Members of the Media;

Excellency, on behalf of the CARICOM Heads of Government, it gives me immense pleasure to extend to you and your Delegation, warm and fraternal greetings on behalf of our Caribbean Community.

It is deeply symbolic that we should be hosting this Meeting here in Antigua and Barbuda, forever etched in our Region's history as the birthplace of our integration process.

I should like on behalf of us all to extend our deep appreciation to the Government and People of Antigua and Barbuda for the excellent arrangements which have been put in place for the hosting of this Sixth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community and Cuba.

The warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all Delegations, upon our arrival at the impressive V.C Bird International, and the sustained warmth and affection extended throughout our stay, have framed the context for a successful Meeting.

Colleague Heads, our Countries joined by the waters of the Caribbean and Atlantic continue to be joined by a deeply profound sense of history. Lest we forget, year after year these same waters and the environment, serve us devastating reminders of our joint and symbiotic development aspirations as People and Small States of the Caribbean.

The intensification of the natural disasters, including the recent immense level of devastation caused by the Hurricanes Irma and María to Members of our Caribbean family, particularly in Dominica, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Puerto Rico and St. Marten, demands that as Heads and Custodians of the collective aspirations of our Caribbean People, that we too intensify the relationship among and between CARICOM and Cuba.

It is in the context of this **unavoidable truth** of climate change with small Caribbean States at the 'epi-center' that I wish to again express our collective sympathies to the Governments and People of our Community who have been severely impacted by the passage of these two powerful hurricanes.

We also wish to convey our heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the Government and People of Cuba following the destruction and loss of life wrought by these disasters.

Even at this time, we must not forget that difficult path back which some Members of our CARICOM family, such as Haiti continue to endure in rebounding from these devastations.

Here too, I wish to very publicly express our gratitude to the Government and People of Cuba for being among the 'First Responders' to these crises, and as well for sustaining

the support to our CARICOM States, long after the glare of the cameras have receded, and international attention moves on the next story.

President Castro, ...our Community offers to you and the people of Cuba a deeply profound thank you for your unfaltering assistance.

Your contribution to the rebuilding process in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda is yet another tangible gesture of solidarity driving the appreciation in the 'value' of our collective familial relationship.

It is in this context of the "New Normal" that is Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction, and the new reality for Small States, that the Conference must be recorded as taking a number of important decisions.

Falling on the eve of the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, it is prudent for us to send a political signal about the need for 'WTO Flexibility' for Small States, during the phase of reconstruction.

Such flexibility would require that the WTO Rules and Disciplines must not stand in the way of reconstruction for affected Small States and Small Vulnerable Economies, such as those of the Caribbean.

Having grappled with the trauma of Post-Hurricane devastation and a Structural Adjustment Programme in Grenada, and having witnessed first-hand the scale and intensity of the Destruction in Dominica, Barbuda, and other Caribbean States, I'm clear that this "Demand" stands as the most significant outcome for Small States, from the upcoming WTO Ministerial.

As Heads, we must all immediately instruct our Delegations to work towards this "Outcome" at the WTO Ministerial.

We must use the platform of our meeting today, to clearly transmit this signal to the World.

President Castro, many developments have tried and tested the fortitude and solidarity of our CARIOM-Cuba relationship. Forty-five years after, the historically significant watershed act by four (4) CARICOM States, our relationship has matured into one of mutual and enduring bonds of trust, mutual respect, friendship and cooperation.

A fundamental element of this enduring relationship as long-standing Members of our 'Caribbean family' has been the generous and highly significant technical assistance which Cuba renders to the CARICOM Community.

Colleagues, it is undeniable that we live in an era of unprecedented and dynamic innovation and adaptation in Science and Technology and ICT. Indeed, Science and Technology and ICT, ranks among the central cross-cutting development themes for both CARICOM and Cuba. In the context of recent development, Science and Technology will be need to play a central role in our making us more climate resilient.

Accordingly, as a CARICOM Region and certainly for me as Lead Head for Science and Technology, we anticipate the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Science and Technology Cooperation, between our respective States.

We in CARICOM are ever grateful for the support of the Government and People of Cuba in critical areas such as health, with the provision and training of medical doctors and health care workers.

Cuba has also provided its assistance to the building of regional capacity in the social and cultural fields. We are grateful too, for the tremendous assistance accorded to us in agriculture, sports and disaster management.

Colleague Heads, our scripture tells us it is good to say thanks, Indeed on this occasion, and having regard to the 'twin-challenges' of debt and development confronted by all our States, causes us on this occasion to recognize and to pay tribute to the significant contribution of the Government and People of Cuba with our infrastructure development.

Colleagues, I refer specifically, though not exclusively, to the contribution of Cuba to the contribution of the International airports in Grenada, and more recently in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Without the assistance of Cuba, we would have been confronted with far higher debt, and with retarded development.

President Castro, your country has reiterated its willingness to collaborate on disaster risk reduction and share its experience in preventing and addressing these events.

In this regard, CARICOM welcomes the proposed Memorandum of Understanding on Disaster Risk Reduction, between the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and the National Civil Defence General Staff of Cuba.

We in CARICOM, remain committed and constant in our advocacy for Cuba to be fully integrated into all aspects of hemispheric and international relations. Our Caribbean Community is also steadfast and unrelenting in our call for the lifting of the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States.

The CARICOM Members of this 'CARICOM-Cuba' family stand convinced that the improvement of relations between Cuba and the US would redound to the benefit of the wider Caribbean sub-region and of Latin America.

It would be remiss of me to end my remarks without taking the time to pay tribute to an icon, a great revolutionary leader and an outstanding and genuine friend of the Caribbean, Cuba's former President, Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz.

Fidel, offered the expertise of his country to help develop independent countries across Latin America, the Caribbean, as well as in Africa.

On behalf of the Caribbean Community, we express our heartfelt solidarity and sympathy with the Cuban Government and People, on the occasion of the first anniversary of his passing, which was commemorated a week ago.

Mr. President, in assuming the Presidency of Cuba, you stated your commitment to continue, and deepen the friendly and fraternal relationship which exists between the Caribbean Community and Cuba.

Today, as we gather on the occasion of this the 6th CARICOM –Cuba Summit, we can all testify that under your leadership and administration, Cuba's support to CARICOM remains steadfast.

Your Excellency, Colleagues, this Sixth Summit provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our shared Caribbean identity and our commitment to South-South Cooperation in the promotion and protection of our common interests.

Cuba's contribution to CARICOM, even at times at great personal cost to its own people, is evident in particular in Grenada by the recent monument erected commemorating and paying tribute at long last to the 24 Cuban lives lost in Grenada in 1983.

Long live the memory of their sacrifice.

As we embark on our deliberations, be assured of the Caribbean Community's commitment to the further strengthening of the familial and fraternal relationship forged on behalf of our Governments and people over the past 45 years.

Thank you.