



**Assembly Of Caribbean People
Asamblea Del Pueblo Caribeño
Assemblée Du Peuple Caraïbe
Assemblee van het Caraibisch Volk
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**Open Letter to the Heads of Government of CARICOM
Matters of Regional and International Importance**

Dear Heads of Government,

On behalf of the Assembly of Caribbean People we first wish to congratulate the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on the attainment of its Fiftieth Anniversary. There is no doubting that it is quite an achievement for a process of regional integration to have been sustained and deepened over such a period. Very few regional integration processes have been able to claim such longevity and we in the Caribbean can indeed feel a sense of accomplishment in this regard.

At the same time, however, anniversaries give one occasion to pause, reflect and engage in serious introspection. It is therefore also very true to say that CARICOM has not achieved all that it could have and even less than it has committed to do. We cite, for example, the adoption of the very important and timely Report appropriately entitled "*Time for Action*" which was produced by the Sir Shridath Ramphal chaired West Indian Commission in 1992. The Commission had as its members other very eminent CARICOM citizens and addressed a wide range of issues that were affecting the region and which would need to be tackled as we entered the 21st Century.

Heads, we know that you are only too aware that more than three fifths (31 out of 50 years) of the life of CARICOM have elapsed since "*Time for Action*", yet many of its crucial recommendations have either not been implemented or like the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) only partly implemented. We note that CARICOM commissioned Professor Norman Girvan to do a study with recommendations that would move forward the process of implementation of the Single Economy. That major study was completed after an iterative process and approved in July 2007 by Heads of Government. Sixteen years have elapsed since that report entitled "*Towards a Single Development Vision and the Role of the Single Economy*". The state of the education system, to take another example, was carefully analysed by the West Indian Commission and it was recognised that we were routinely failing a very large percentage

of our students. This failure of the system has led us to the point where a few short months ago, in Port of Spain, there was another High Level meeting where crime and violence was discussed and it was identified that the education system was a major contributor.

We cite these examples not to criticise or condemn but rather to state the obvious that the more our region fails to implement, the more we fall behind in the achievement of ensuring the safety, welfare and well-being of all of our people. We therefore call for this CARICOM Heads of Government meeting to commit to the urgent implementation of decisions already taken. If this does not happen then the region's people will become increasingly disillusioned which will not bode well for our future especially since many are already cynical about the political culture and governance shortcomings in their country.

Heads, in this our Open Letter, we wish, however, to address matters relative to our individual and regional sovereignty given that at this particular Summit there will be the presence of the Secretary General of the United Nations and the U.S. Secretary of State. These matters address one Member State of CARICOM and two Member States of the Association of Caribbean States, in which CARICOM Members States are in the significant majority.

1. Haiti.

Heads we have consistently written to you expressing our concerns and articulating our position on Haiti, a Member State of CARICOM. You are therefore very aware that we oppose foreign intervention and, in particular, foreign military intervention. We have noted that to date, CARICOM has also adopted this position, in spite of the fact that some Member States may be in support of such intervention. We also note the CARICOM Initiative of being a Facilitator of Dialogue of Haitian Stakeholders that could lead to a solution to the Haitian crisis. We have also noted the explicit statements by the UN Secretary General both here in Port of Spain and a few days ago in Port au Prince, calling for a multilateral military force to be sent to Haiti. We are also aware that the position of the United States is similar to that of the UN SG. We therefore urge CARICOM to:

- (i) hold firm on its position that there should be NO military intervention in Haiti;
- (ii) tell the Core Group (US, France and Canada) to stop their continued interference in Haiti's internal affairs and, in particular, their insistence that the illegitimate Prime Minister Ariel Henry must be part of an interim or transitional government;
- (iii) demand that the United Nations pay reparations to the Haitian victims of cholera, which was introduced into Haiti by the UN's troops – MINUSTAH;
- (iv) ensure that the process of facilitation by CARICOM which started in Jamaica some weeks ago and which is to be continued in Haiti be more transparent such that the agenda for the dialogue not only be known by stakeholders beforehand, but is shaped by them; and that none of the Core Group participates in the process of dialogue as they cannot in any way be conceived as being Haitian.

2. Cuba.

Heads, we are confident that you will communicate to the US Secretary of State the demand that the US President revoke all the Trump era actions that made even more punitive the

illegal and illegitimate economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. In particular, we are sure that you will make it abundantly clear to the US Administration that the US must remove Cuba from its so-called list of countries that engage in state sponsoring of terrorism.

The US Secretary of State must know that CARICOM's position in this, the 21st Century, repudiates the very idea of the Munroe Doctrine which was birthed by the US two centuries ago. The US must learn to respect the sovereignty of every state, large or small, regardless of the ideological position or political and economic system that a state may pursue. Furthermore, the US of Jim Crow and institutional racism and gender and other forms of discrimination that persist to this very day as evidenced by laws that criminalise the teaching of the history of Jim Crow, or the banning of books, or that seek to disenfranchise citizens right to vote – does not have the moral, far less legal right to engage in regime change of governments that they do not like.

The US preaching of upholding democracy and being against autocracy rings hollow indeed, especially when it supports the Israeli state's apartheid policies against the Palestinians. Israel, it is to be noted, is the only state that has consistently supported the US blockade of Cuba when every other nation state has opposed the blockade when the Annual Resolution comes to the vote in the UN General Assembly. Israel is, as we write, engaged in the indiscriminate bombing of Palestinians. Israel has violated time and time again UN Resolutions; it has encouraged settlers to violently attack Palestinians in the West Bank, destroy their homes and illegally seize their lands. Israel has cut off water and electricity to Palestinians and engaged in other acts that ought to have been declared crimes against humanity, yet the Israeli state gets away with this because of support by the US.

CARICOM must tell the US that this double standard is unacceptable. Cuba, far from engaging in state sponsored terrorism is actually facilitating peace negotiations between the Colombian government and organisations that were involved in armed struggle in Colombia. Cuba is actively promoting peace, yet they are being penalised for this, while Israel which is engaged in war and apartheid, is being rewarded.

3. Venezuela

Heads, we are equally confident that you will reiterate your principled position on Venezuela, that is, that all the unilateral sanctions imposed by Executive Order of the US President be revoked. And, further, that the assets, inclusive of the CITGO and other oil related earnings of PDVSA, that belong to the Venezuelan people be returned to them. The US actions against Venezuela are illegitimate and are another example of the Munroe Doctrine whereby the US arrogated unto itself the right to decide who should lead the governments of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We shall never forget all the coup d'états orchestrated by the US in which democratically elected heads of government were removed. The *raison d'être* for the US sanctions against Venezuela were explicitly stated by the President who imposed most of them, Donald Trump, when he said that the plan was to get Venezuela's oil by removing Maduro.

CARICOM with one voice must say that the sanctions against Venezuela affect not only that country but the entire region in terms of both energy security and illegal migration. These sanctions violate Venezuela's sovereignty and our sovereign right to engage in economic and trade relations and are unacceptable to CARICOM.

Important Initiatives

Heads, we look forward with great interest to your Final Declaration and other decisions from this the 45th Heads of Government Meeting.

1. We anticipate that CARICOM will fully back the extraordinary work and advocacy by Prime Minister Mia Mottley as she advances the Bridgetown Initiative as a means of addressing climate change and the transformation of the international financial institutions such that there is financing for the sustainable development of small states.
2. We also look forward to more support for the work of the CARICOM Reparations Committee and for CARICOM to be more insistent on this issue, including the demand that France repay Haiti that which it extorted from Haiti for daring to fight and win its independence in 1804 and end slavery.
3. We also trust that the recent election of the Trinidad and Tobago Ambassador Dennis Francis to be the President of the United Nations General Assembly and of Guyana to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from January 2024 will enable CARICOM's role in addressing matters of regional and international importance to be elevated and that we utilise these positions to rebalance the global order in the interest of small states.

Yours Truly,



David Abdulah, Trinidad and Tobago

For and on behalf of the Regional Executive Committee of the Assembly of Caribbean People

David Denny, Barbados
Camille Chalmers, Haiti
Claudette Etnel, Suriname
Hilda Guerrero, Puerto Rico
Robert Sae, Martinique
Ivan Rodriguez, Dominican Republic
Cuban chapter of ACP

Towards a people's agenda for the sovereignty of the region and the welfare of the people
En vue de l'élaboration d'un agenda pour la souveraineté de la caraïbe et pour le bien-être de notre peuple
Hacia una agenda popular para la soberanía del caribe y el bienestar de nuestro pueblo Werke naan een
volks – agenda voor soevereiniteiten welzyn van het volk in de regio