

CARICOM Secretariat, Georgetown, Guyana

4 September 1998

Attached for your information is the text of a [statement](#) issued following the Special meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States following their meeting in Santo Domingo de Guzman, Dominican Republic from August 20-22, 1998.

**THE STATEMENT OF SANTO DOMINGO
THE CARIBBEAN ENCOUNTER: TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY**

Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Forum of ACP States(CARIFORUM), the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and leaders of delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines;

HAVING MET in special session in Santo Domingo de Guzman, the capital of the Dominican Republic, from the 20-22 August 1998, in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the founding of Santo Domingo de Guzman and the 25th anniversary of the Caribbean Community;

HAVING WELCOMED His Excellency Dr. Fidel Castro, President of the Republic of Cuba, as a Special Invitee to their meeting;

RECOGNISING the historic and significant convocation for the first time of such a Summit in the Dominican Republic;

RECOGNISING ALSO the contribution of the Lomé Convention to the formal establishment of the Caribbean Forum in 1992 and the need to strengthen this relationship as a means to promote regional cooperation and integration;

REAFFIRMING on this historic occasion of the first CARIFORUM Summit in the Dominican Republic, our commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Georgetown Agreement which led to the establishment of the ACP Group in 1975;

CONSCIOUS that this Summit is being held at a timely moment given the forthcoming commencement of negotiations between the ACP countries and the European Union on a successor arrangement to the current ACP-EU Lomé Convention and that new ACP-EU Agreement must build on the *acquis* of the Lomé Convention;

RECALLING the commitment and decisions of the Libreville Declaration which has among its valued and fundamental aspects those of unity and solidarity of the ACP Group and its retention as a single entity;

HAVING ENGAGED in discussions characterised by a spirit of friendship, cordiality and mutual respect;

DECLARED their pleasure to have participated in the historic celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the founding of the city of Santo Domingo de Guzman and in the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Caribbean Community;

EXPRESSED their gratitude for the warm welcome and generous hospitality offered by the Government and the people of the Dominican Republic;

ACKNOWLEDGED the importance of the progress achieved and achievable through the mechanism of political

dialogue, cooperation, and consultation aimed at improving the destiny of the Region and at deepening the processes of democratisation, respect for fundamental human rights and freedom, good governance, economic and social developments and the strengthening of regional integration;

DECLARED their ongoing commitment to the strengthening of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), as a mechanism for consultations, and cooperation in furtherance of growth and development in the Region, welcomed the convocation of the second ACS Summit in 1999, and noted the offer of the Dominican Republic to host such a Summit;

REAFFIRMED their conviction of the important role of democracy in preserving peace, harmony, mutual respect, and in fostering the development of nations and their adhesion to good governance and transparency, further recognising the strong links existing between these factors and economic development;

REITERATED their commitment to the norms of international law, as established in the Charters of the United Nations, and the Organisation of American States;

VIEWED with serious concern that foreign debt continues to limit the development capacity of their nations by constraining the social investment so necessary to achieve the peace and stability required for the Region's development;

RECOGNISED that the phenomenon of globalisation presents a challenge for the Caribbean Region requiring fundamental changes in the economies and the development process of the Region while increasing the risk of marginalisation for smaller, more vulnerable economies;

RECOGNISED ALSO the important role of the World Trade Organisation in international trade and expressed their continuing concern that the benefits of globalisation and trade liberalisation be equitably distributed;

REITERATED their determination to actively participate in the negotiations for the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, in order to ensure the incorporation of the interest of smaller economies and their full participation in the process;

WELCOMED the signing of the Agreement establishing the Free Trade Area between the Caribbean Community and the Dominican Republic which will serve not only to increase opportunities for trade in goods and services, and investment between both parties, but also to strengthen the traditional bonds of friendship that exist within the region;

FURTHER WELCOMED the forthcoming European Union/Latin America and Caribbean Summit, which will serve to establish guidelines for future relations between the two Regions and to determine the impact of the relationship on the wider international environment. They requested the assistance of SELA in preparing CARIFORUM's delegations for effective participation in the Summit;

NOTED with the greatest interest, the proposal by the Dominican Republic for a Strategic Alliance between the Caribbean and Central America which would influence overall development strategy by helping to enhance competitiveness and economic growth, strengthen the productive and technological capacity of the Region, attract foreign investment and help in coordinating trade policies in the various international arrangements in which they participate;

REVIEWED their strategy with regard to the following:

Negotiations of a Post Lomé IV Agreement

The Heads of State and Government exchanged views on the process of preparation for their countries' participation in the negotiations for Post Lomé IV relationship with the European Union.

They agreed that the ACP mandate for the Post Lomé IV negotiations should be based on the fundamental principles that have sustained the previous Conventions, with a principal objective including economic growth grounded in peace, security and stability, food security, the elimination of poverty and the participation of the wider civil society. They highlighted the importance of maintaining an open and balanced political dialogue.

The Heads of State and Government maintained that future financial and technical cooperation should continue to be implemented in a manner supportive of the development strategy of the ACP States. Likewise in view of the rapid liberalisation of international trade, it will be necessary for ACP States to be granted a reasonable period of transition to enable them to improve their competitiveness. The duration of that transition should depend on the level of development of the different Regions and countries. It should also provide for maintaining a non-reciprocal preferential system during that transition period, thus allowing for a more realistic transition that will facilitate a better adaptation of their economies.

They reaffirmed the importance of providing within the post-Lomé IV Convention, arrangements to facilitate investment in ACP States and for private sectors of those countries to generally play a greater role in the new ACP/EU relationships.

Cuba/CARIFORUM

In recognising the particular significance of Cuba's place at the Summit, as a member of the Caribbean family, the Heads of State and Government looked forward to Cuba's full membership and eventual participation in post-Lomé IV arrangements and in this connection they affirmed Cuba's immediate participation in the Working Group of Caribbean Ambassadors in Brussels.

Caribbean/North America Relations

The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to the decisions of the Caribbean/US Summit of Bridgetown, Barbados, May 1997 as enshrined in the Partnership for Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean.

With regard to economic and trade matters and in keeping with the undertakings by the United States in the Partnership for Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean, they expressed their deep disappointment that the US had not yet enacted legislation to grant NAFTA Parity to products of Caribbean origin. They were equally unhappy that stated US commitments of support for satisfactory marketing arrangements for Caribbean bananas in their traditional markets, had also not yet been translated into appropriate action.

The Heads of State and Government acknowledged that a number of the Region's concerns were shared by Central American countries and reiterated their intention to strengthen their collaboration with Central America in sustained efforts to achieve their mutual objectives.

They look forward to the successful outcome of the first Caribbean/US Trade and Investment Forum to be held in the Dominican Republic on 12-14 January 1999 to which end they undertook to encourage their private sectors to actively participate. They reiterated their determination to act together in countering crime and violence, arms trafficking, the trade in illicit drugs and strengthening the criminal justice systems.

They expressed their satisfaction with the strengthening of relations between the Region and Canada, especially in the areas of economic cooperation and trade.

Sustainable Environment and Equitable Economic Development

The Heads of State and Government reiterated their support for the preservation of the environment as stipulated in the Declaration and Action Plan of the Summit of the Americas, the Declaration and Action Plan of Sustainable Development in the Hemisphere of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the United Nations Programme for the Environment and the Protocol on Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities.

The Heads of State and Government endorsed the proposal for the Caribbean Sea to be internationally recognised as a Special Area in the context of Sustainable Development. They recognised the Caribbean Sea as an invaluable regional patrimony and agreed to give special priority to its preservation including the species living therein and to defend it against economic plunder and the passage of nuclear and toxic waste.

They stressed the importance of the 1999 UN Review Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States and agreed that every effort should be sought to launch an initiative to have the Caribbean Sea internationally recognised as a Special Area in the context of Sustainable Development at that Review Conference.

The Heads of State and Government committed themselves to channeling their efforts towards improving the standard of living of the people of the Region, by the pursuit of sustainable development, education and culture, and by promoting human resource development.

EU/Latin American/Caribbean Drug Cooperation Mechanism The Heads of State and Government, reaffirmed their commitment to concerted regional action to combat the trade in illegal drugs and strongly endorsed the EU/Latin American/Caribbean Drug Cooperation Mechanism and while noting that some CARIFORUM States, namely the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Suriname have already joined, they called upon all Member States of CARIFORUM to participate in the mechanism to redress the negative social and economic consequences of the drug trade on Caribbean States. In this regard, they took note of the various regional initiatives already being undertaken by the CARIFORUM States.

A Vision Towards the 21st Century

The Heads of State and Government recognised the historic significance of the occasion of their Meeting taking place as it is on the threshold of the new millennium which foreshadows fundamental changes in the forms of human interaction and societal development and economic prosperity. In that regard they pledged to continue to explore possibilities and develop mechanisms for enhanced cooperation among the Governments and peoples of their countries.