Cooperative Republic *of* Guyana

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Address

*of*

His Excellency Brigadier David Granger

President *of the* Cooperative Republic *of* Guyana

*to the 38th Meeting of the Conference of
Heads of Government of the
Caribbean Community,
Grenada
2017.07.04-06*

The delegation of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana expresses its profound appreciation to the Prime Minister, Government and people of Grenada for their warm welcome. We thank them for the excellent arrangements made to facilitate our participation in the 38th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community.

I extend to you, Dr. the RT. Hon. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, congratulations on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Caribbean Community.

I welcome the President of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Jovenel Moïse, to his first Summit meeting.

I welcome the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Dr. Hubert Minnis, also, to his first Summit meeting.

I congratulate Ms. Shirley Pryce of Jamaica, the recipient of the Twelfth CARICOM Triennial Award for Women, who is being honoured today for her contribution to trade unionism and women's development.

I express my gratitude to the Secretary General Ambassador Irwin La Rocque and the hardworking staff of the Caribbean Community Secretariat for their invaluable support during my semester as Chairman.

**Citizen, Country and Community
Safety, stability, solidarity and security**

The Caribbean Community is an association of independent states bound by a covenant. The *Treaty of Chaguaramas* allows us to pursue our vital interests at three levels - the level of the citizen, the level of country and the level of community.

The historical and geographical determinants which brought us together, the deliberations on which we shall enter, the decisions we shall make and the actions which we shall take to implement them will advance our interests at all three levels.

The confidence which our citizens repose in us can be eroded; the economies of our countries can be undermined and the efficacy of our international advocacy can be impaired if our efforts are ineffectual.

The Caribbean Community was erected purposefully on four pillars - integration, human and social development, foreign policy coordination and security.

The *Community* could collapse if these pillars are shaken.

The *Community* finds itself in an international situation today that is replete with uncertainty and complexity:

* US policy, as a result of changes in its administration, is uncertain.
* UK policy, owing to its resolve to exit the European Union, is uncertain.
* EU policy, after the expiration of the Cotonou Accord, is uncertain.
* AU policy, within the African, Caribbean and Pacific
group, will be driven by the continent's collective interests, different from CARICOM’s, and is uncertain.

The *Community* has vital strategic interests to protect and promote in its international relations. It is imperative that it engages foreign states to preserve its interests. The Community also, must ready itself for negotiations with the UK, EU and the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States.

The emergence of these groups of states will play a prominent role in international relations in the twenty-first century, just as the seaborne empires dominated the nineteenth century and the rise of independent states characterised the twentieth century.

The *Caribbean Community* cannot cling to an obsolete model of insularity in light of these international changes. The mirage of fifteen airlines, fifteen cricket teams, defence forces and fifteen embassies in the capitals of the world might mesmerise a few sentimental romantics but could deplete the treasuries of our states.

The *Community*, challenged by the constantly changing international situation, must redouble its efforts to ensure a more safe society for its citizens, more stable economies for its countries, deeper solidarity and a more secure hemisphere.

**Citizens**

Citizens are at the centre of this Community. The original *Treaty of Chaguaramas* iterates the determination of our founding fathers to: “…strengthen the bonds among the people of the Caribbean [and] to fulfil our people's aspiration to "…full employment and improved standards of work and living...”

The *Charter of Civil Society of the Caribbean Community* establishes that we are, foremost, a community of citizens. We respect every citizen's fundamental human rights, including the right to life, liberty and security of the person.' The perverse notion of a ‘stateless’ person is anathema to the *Community’s* concept of human dignity.

The Community must never cease condemning inhuman treatment meted out to Caribbean citizens in the Dominican Republic or anywhere else.

"La semaine dernière, nous étions des Haitiens... aujourd'hui, nous sommes des Haitiens... la semaine prochaine, nous serons des Haitiens."

The Community must be mindful of its duty to protect its citizens and reject the odious notion of 'statelessness'. Respect for the rights of the citizen must extend to respect for freedom of movement, which is enshrined in the *Revised Treaty*. It obliges us to dismantle restrictive immigration practices, which impede free movement.

Citizenship is sacred. It is not a bauble to be bought in a bazaar. Every State has the sovereign right to determine its own immigration policies consistent with its *Treaty* commitments. That right, however, should not impair the integrity of our mutual relations or damage the ideal of free movement within a single domestic space.

**Country**

The *Community*, with a total land area of 462, 352 km2, is larger than Sweden and, if it were a single country, would be the 56th largest in the world. Size matters. The *Community* be the 56th largest in the world. Size matters. The
Community might be an association of small states but it is larger and stronger when it is united. It must not underestimate the value of its solidarity or its strength when it speaks with a single voice as a Community. Solidarity is a source of strength.

Foreign policy coordination is the sharp instrument, the cutting edge, of our diplomacy, to gain our great advantage. We should not damage it.

The *Community* has the land, the labour, the talent and the capital to guarantee food security for its citizens. The *Community's* annual food import bill, which exceeds US$4B, is a notorious indictment of its ability to promote investment and stimulate intra-regional trade in agricultural commodities.

Non-tariff barriers continue to constrain trade in food. The *Community* needs to re-examine how it can dismantle the non-tariff barriers to trade in agricultural products while generating employment for its citizens.

Commerce is the lifeblood of our economies. Small internal markets consign states to high dependence on external trade. Intraregional trade, therefore, is important. The Caribbean Common Market was established to ensure

markets for regional production, inter alia. Intraregional trade provides a basis for increasing national production, augmenting investment and generating employment. The environment is an inescapable economic reality. The *Community* possesses unmatched natural assets - both on the mainland states and in the island states. The *Community*, taken as a whole, is blessed with rich natural capital breathtaking beaches, extensive grasslands, entrancing wetlands, evergreen rainforests, magnificent waterfalls, majestic highlands and unsurpassable biodiversity with some of the world's rarest species of flora and fauna.

These assets are the bases of the tourist industry. Adopting a "green" agenda can help to protect the Community from the threat of environmental hazard and natural disaster and safeguard people's livelihoods and the industries on which they rely.

Many member-states already embrace the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy, a forest conservation initiative, which was launched at the 24th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta in 2015. It is one of the ways in which we can protect our environment while deriving sustainable economic benefits. I commend this initiative.

The Caribbean, our home, must be secure. It must remain a 'zone of peace' through our unstinting solidarity in defence of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states.

Security cooperation, under the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACs) and through international agreements such as the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), have helped to keep our citizens safe. They are necessary but not sufficient.

Security cooperation, seemingly so successful a decade ago during international cricket in 2007, must remain a priority in this age of international terror in 2017.

*The Roadmap for a single ICT Space,* which we approved at the *28th Inter-sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community* held in Georgetown in February 2017, will help us to straddle the 3,200 km2 of sea space, which separates Nassau in the north from Paramaribo in the south, through information and communications technology. We must advance that roadmap.

**Citizen, Country and Community**

The Grand Anse Declaration and Work Programme for the Advancement of the Integration Movement paved the way for the creation of a single economic space – the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). It was here in Grenada in 1989 that we agreed to deepen the integration process in response to the emerging geo-political order.

The CSME is the *Community's* best response to the inevitable changes in its traditional markets in Europe, the prevalence of economic liberalization and the emergence of economic blocs. The CSME is still the best vehicle to allow small states to compete in the global economy while promoting economic and social development.

The CSME is the most ambitious project attempted by the *Community*; it must not become its most ambiguous. The CSME, especially given the present uncertainties facing the Region's international relations, must be accelerated in order to create a single economic space.

Six months has been a long time in international relations, as we have seen in the US, UK, EU and the AU. This semester has provided ample opportunities for the *Community* to work together to protect our vital interests at the levels of citizen, country and the community.

With such a clear vision and commitment, CARICOM can confront the future with confidence.

I thank you.