

# NEWS: CARICOM, Chile to intensify dialogue, cooperation

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GEORGETOWN, Guyana, 9 February 2012/ CARICOM: Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Member States and Chile have committed to intensifying political dialogue and cooperation as part of efforts towards sustainable development, and the improvement of the well-being of their peoples.

The commitment came at the conclusion of the second meeting of the CARICOM-Chile Joint Commission in Santiago, Chile, 3-4 February 2012, and was made against the background of the impact of the economic and financial crisis, particularly on small developing countries, which threatened to erode the progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations Development Agenda.

Agreeing on the need to expand cooperation programmes, the two sides identified the following areas for priority action: natural disaster management; sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security and sanitary and phyto sanitary measures; intra-CARICOM cooperation; capacity building; private enterprises and competitiveness (with emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises); trade negotiation training; diplomatic training; Spanish language training; and security.

CARICOM and Chile agreed to work actively for the on-going integration and coordination endeavours in Latin America and the Caribbean, while ensuring that issues that are of vital importance to CARICOM are duly recognized and addressed within the context of the recently established Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a regional bloc in which they are all members.

Among the areas identified for greater cooperation are combating terrorism and the problem of drugs, defending the environment, and promoting cultural exchanges and people to people contact. Other matters which the two sides agreed to pursue include the implementation of visa waiver arrangements that would pave the way for the free movement of people and expertise and the promotion of reciprocal trade and investment.

At the opening of the talks, Dr. the Hon Timothy Harris, Minister of International Trade, Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, Marine Resources, Consumer Affairs and Constituency Empowerment, St. Kitts and Nevis, warned that time was of the essence and pointed out that it was important not only to agree on the areas of cooperation, but also to identify the mechanism and roadmap to ensure timely implementation.

"Never has South-South Cooperation – on both the political and economic fronts - taken centre stage as it has in this era. We are witnesses to monumental and systemic global shifts in power and influence that see Latin America and the Caribbean, and a number of developing countries coming into their own. It is up to us to fully exploit the possibilities opening up to us to make the shared development aspirations of our people tangible," said the Minister, who is also Chair of CARICOM's Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR).

CARICOM, he told delegates at the meeting, was of the firm view that "together we can make a difference, not only in our own regional destinies, but in the global development trajectory. And it is imperative that we make a difference as we are, like many small and vulnerable economies, confronted with serious, and some might say unprecedented challenges."

He identified climate change and its concomitant risks, the global financial and economic crises and increasing human insecurity, among the common challenges CARICOM and Chile faced.

"But if Chile and CARICOM are all too familiar with development threats, we are also only too conscious of how our joint action can attenuate challenges. Chile's support to Haiti following the latter's cataclysmic earthquakes in 2010 remains a vivid example to CARICOM of Chilean solidarity with our people. We want once more to say thank you," Dr. Harris said.

- CARICOM

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