

NOTES FOR A PRESENTATION ON THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
AND THE PRACTICE OF MULTILATERALISM

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ABSTRACT

The Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) was signed on July 4, 1973 by the Heads of Government of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Subsequently, in 2001, Community members signed the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The CARICOM Secretariat (www.caricom.org) is located in Georgetown, Guyana.

The membership of this regional integration movement comprises the following fifteen (15) states: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. There are five (5) associate Members: the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands Anguilla, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda.

The Community works inter alia, to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, to ensure the equitable sharing of the benefits of integration, to coordinate foreign policy and to create a single economic space through the removal of restrictions resulting in the free movement of goods, services, persons, capital and technology.

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The geographical boundaries of CARICOM stretch from The Commonwealth of The Bahamas in the north, southward to Guyana and Suriname – both on the north coast of the South American mainland. They also extend from Belize in the west on the Central American mainland to Barbados – the most easterly of the islands.

All CARICOM countries are classified as developing countries. All relatively small in population and size, they are surprisingly diverse in terms of geography and population, culture and levels of economic and social development. CARICOM countries share similarities and challenges. On the one hand, they are all in proximity to major markets in North and South America, and most of them have had to transition from agriculture or mining to a service-driven economy, especially tourism and financial services. On the other hand, they have to overcome the challenges of small size with associated lack of economies of scale and vulnerability to external shocks, in addition to frequent natural disasters (one recalls for example, the magnitude 7.0 earthquake which devastated Haiti in January, 2010, the effects of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Antigua and Barbuda as well as in Dominica in September, 2017 and the destruction wrought earlier this month by Tropical Storm Dorian in Abaco and Grand Bahama of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas).

BRIEF HISTORY OF CARICOM

It is interesting to consider some of the background to the march toward the Caribbean Community:

The West Indies Federation

Between January 1958 and May 1962, the West Indies Federation was a political union among several Caribbean countries which had been colonies of the United Kingdom. Established in 1958 by the British Caribbean Federation Act of 1956, the West Indies Federation comprised the ten territories of: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, the then St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, with its capital in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The then British Guiana (now Guyana) and British Honduras (now Belize) had observer status. The Federation was established with the aim of establishing a political union among its members that would become independent from Britain as a single state, but internal political conflict caused the Federation to flounder before the single state idea could materialize. The West Indies Federation fell apart when the largest island, Jamaica, with-

drew and declared itself independent in August, 1962 followed by Trinidad and Tobago by the end of August, 1962. Subsequently, the other members gained independence-Barbados in 1966; the Bahamas in 1973; Grenada in 1974; Dominica in 1978; St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 1979; Antigua and Barbuda in 1981; and St. Kitts and Nevis in 1983.

Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA and CARICOM)

The search for Caribbean economic viability through some form of economic integration was started in 1965 by the political leaders of Guyana, Barbados, and Antigua. The proposal was modelled on the European custom union, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). By May 1968, all the other English-speaking Caribbean nations had joined in the creation of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA). The ultimate goals of the union were, first, to encourage the kind of economic development that would provide the highest rates of employment, and second, to reduce the region's external economic dependence.

Having agreed in October, 1972 to deepen the integration process, Guyana, and Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago (called the "more developed countries" within CARIFTA) became the original signatories on July 4, 1973 of the Treaty of Chaguaramas which established the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). Subsequently, a Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) was signed in 2001.

By July 1974, all other members of CARIFTA had become full members of CARICOM. In July 1983, The Bahamas became the 13th member of the Caribbean Community (but not of the Common Market). Suriname was the 14th Member State to join the Community in July 1995 and the Common Market in January 1996. Haiti was formally admitted as the 15th Member State in July 2002.

To list them all, the 15 member states are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

There are five associate Members in July 1991, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands became the first Associate Members followed by Anguilla in July, 1999, the Cayman Islands in May 2002 and Bermuda in July, 2003.

In addition, there are eight observers, Aruba, Colombia, Curacao, The Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Sint Maarten and Venezuela.

The three objectives of the Community at its inception were economic integration, co-ordination of foreign policy and functional co-operation in

areas such as health, education and culture and other areas related to human and social development.

In 2001, the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government signed the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC), rebranding the Caribbean Community and Common Market to include the proposed CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), with the single market replacing the original Common Market aspect of the grouping. Revisions to the Treaty included the implementation of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), with the Agreement Establishing the CCJ entering into force on 23 July 2003, and the Court being inaugurated on 16 April 2005 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the seat of the Court.

CARICOM countries cover a total area of over 177,000 square miles, and the total population among the 15 countries is 18.7 million.

According to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, CARICOM's principal organs are the Conference of Heads of Government (and its Bureau) and the Community Council of Ministers (The Community Council). They are assisted by the CARICOM Secretariat – the Principal Administrative Organ based in Georgetown, Guyana; by five organs (the Council for Finance and Planning – COFAP; the Council for Trade and Economic Development – COTED; the Council for Foreign and Community Relations – COFCOR; the Council for Human and Social Development – COHSOD; The Council of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE), and by three bodies:

- The Legal Affairs Committee, which provides legal advice to the organs and bodies of the Community;
- The Budget Committee, which examines the draft budget and work programme of the Secretariat and submits recommendations to the Community Council;
- And, the Committee of Central Bank Governors, which provides recommendations to the COFAP on monetary and financial matters.

The post of Chairman (Head of CARICOM) is held in six-month rotation periods by the Heads of State and of Government. CARICOM contains a quasi-Cabinet of the individual Heads of Government who are given specific specialized portfolios of responsibility for overall regional development and integration. The current CARICOM Chairman is Prime Minister Allen Chastanet of St. Lucia.

CARICOM countries are members of a number of multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States. They are among the 79 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the

Pacific (ACP) in partnership with the European Union (EU) under the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, signed in Cotonou in June 2000, for a 20-year period to February, 2020. Fourteen CARICOM countries are members of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

Article 6 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas states that one of the objectives of CARICOM is “enhanced co-ordination of Member States’ foreign and [foreign] economic policies”. Further, Article 16.3 states that the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) shall

Establish measures to co-ordinate the foreign policies of the Member States of the Community, including proposals for joint representation, and seek to ensure, as far as practicable, the adoption of Community positions on major hemispheric and international issues.

COFCOR is also required to coordinate the positions of Member States in inter-governmental organizations. In respect of trade policy, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, in Article 80, provides that “Member States shall coordinate their trade policies with third States or groups of third States”. And Article 15 states that the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), with COFCOR, shall promote and develop coordinated policies for the enhancement of the Community’s external economic and trade relations.

The mandate to embrace multilateralism is clear. Against this background, given their small size, limited resources and vulnerability to all manner of external shocks, CARICOM countries depend on multilateralism to thrive. As such, they tend to work in caucus fashion in dealing with the multilateral institutions. The focus on foreign policy co-ordination is testimony to the importance which CARICOM attaches to multilateral action. During the United Nations’ General Assembly in 2018, CARICOM Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their belief in and commitment to multilateralism and highlighted the threat which the departure from the multilateral approach can pose to global institutions. Implicit in this warning was that multilateralism requires continuous and sustained careful thought, diplomacy, tact and enormous reserves of patience to be cultivated and applied, both within one’s own group or natural partners as well as with all interlocutors.

Two examples come to mind: one is the August 24, 2019 announcement by the Government of Barbados that it has contracted former Prime Minister Owen Arthur to chair a new global commission to examine some of the critical small-island issues ahead of next year’s United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) XV in Barbados. The Barbados-sponsored Global Commission on Small Island Developing States – Trade

Development Options 2020, is expected to prepare papers on issues ranging from the high indebtedness of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to global warming and the impact of artificial intelligence.

A release from the Prime Minister's Office stated that the commissioners would be selected from around the world – after all, the effort that will be needed to ensure the protection of the interests of Small Island Developing States will certainly require involvement, multilateral commitment and support from the large and powerful as well as from the small – and their research “will also cover topics such as the development of a realisable modern trade agenda; an assessment of the current state of SIDS; graduation from access to financing; vulnerability; a narrow economic base enhancing dependence on a small range of products; areas of potential transformation; creative economies; and the development of small enterprises”. It was also noted that papers produced by the commission would be considered in the lead up to Barbados' chairmanship and hosting of UNCTAD XV in 2020.

The second example is the statement made by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, following his country's election by the UN General Assembly in June of this year to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, which the country will assume in January, 2020, as one of two representatives of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC). With its population of 110,589, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is the smallest nation ever to be elected to the Security Council this past June, along with four other non-permanent members, Estonia, Niger, Tunisia and Viet Nam.

Both of these examples reveal the awareness on the part of CARICOM Governments that governing is not easy work and that progress requires preparation, skill and the development of alliances. Failure, or progress so slow as to be considered failure, is more common than dramatic successes. Indeed, even as committed a CARICOM multilateralist as former Guyana Foreign Minister and Commonwealth Secretary General Sir Shridath Ramphal cautioned in 2012 that “While we celebrate survival, we must not ignore our underachievement”.¹

By way of conclusion...

I would like to end with a reflection on what I would like to describe as a form of practice of multilateralism in sport within CARICOM that we so take for granted that we may not even consider it a manifestation of

¹ “Laboring in the Vineyard”, Sir Shridath Ramphal, delivering the 2012 Dr. Eric Williams Memorial Lecture on 26 May, 2012 at the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain.

a multilateral approach. Cricket is the most popular sport in the English-speaking Caribbean. In the sport of cricket, the West Indies is a confederation of fifteen countries and territories, many of which historically formed what was known as the British West Indies.

The West Indies team, nicknamed “The Windies”, are one of the twelve Test cricket teams that attained Test status ninety one (91) years ago in 1928. They were considered amongst the strongest Test teams from the 1960s, ushering a golden age in which they were undisputed champions for the latter part of the 1970s to the mid-1990s. In One Day International Cricket, they have won the World Cup twice and the International Cricket Council Trophy once. The fortunes of the Windies may not be providing much cause for rejoicing at the present time, but the example of the multilateral approach to cricket success that was set during the golden years holds vital lessons on the rewards which the Caribbean Community, dare I say the world community, stand to gain from the strengthened commitment to multilateralism in our international affairs.