

**Remarks by the Rt. Hon. Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister
of Barbados, on the occasion of the High-level Strategic
Dialogue "CARICOM: Vibrant societies, resilient
economies: a partnership for Implementation"
July 2 - 3, 2015**

Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre

Colleague Prime Ministers,

Ministers of Cabinet,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to endorse the sentiment already expressed by Foreign Minister Maxine McClean and to welcome you once again to this High Level Strategic Dialogue, entitled "Vibrant Societies; Resilient Economies: A Partnership for Implementation".

I am especially pleased to see a number of my fellow heads of government of CARICOM countries and to be able to welcome amongst us the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organisation of American States. I also extend a word of thanks to the many organisations and individuals who have made this gathering possible and who will be contributing to our discussions today.

Among these, I thank, in particular, Sir George Alleyne, Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, distinguished Caribbean scholar and leader who will be the moderator of today's session.

Allow me to begin by addressing, head on, as it were, a line of thinking about events such as this one and, for that matter, the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government which will begin later today, here in Barbados. These are, say the critics, mere talking shops, unconnected to the needs of our societies, more focussed on rhetoric than reality.

Almost exactly 21 years ago, in these very halls, Barbados created history by hosting the First United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). That Conference, far from being a talking shop, laid the groundwork for the SIDS process which continues today.

The Third International Conference of SIDS was held in Samoa in September 2014 and elements of the outcome document, the SAMOA Pathway, will be incorporated into the Post 2015 Agenda to be adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the UN at their Summit in September 2015.

Thus, it was with great pride that this morning, together with the Secretary General of the United Nations, **H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon**, I unveiled a plaque in commemoration of that historic event in 1994.

The unveiling of that plaque is not merely a symbol of a past event. It should serve of a constant reminder of our strength and of the leading role that we, as small states with all our challenges, vulnerabilities and imperfections, have played in the past and can continue to play on issues of great importance and relevance to the entire international community.

As we engage in our deliberations at this High Level Dialogue, we do so with the conviction that our size does not determine the value of our contribution, or our relevance but rather, that it is the quality of our ideas, our initiatives, our creativity and our dynamism which distinguish us.

Initiatives like the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) - another example of Caribbean ideas and dynamism at work. This agency was established to cater to the needs of disadvantaged CARICOM countries in the event of natural disasters and other eventualities. It is the first multi-country risk pool in the world and the first insurance instrument to successfully develop a parametric policy backed by both traditional and capital markets.

As I prepare to assume the Chairmanship of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a collective of small states with a proud tradition of accomplishment, at the regional as well as at the international level, I am reminded of the words of one of my predecessors, Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford,

the fourth Prime Minister of an independent Barbados. In addressing the First United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, he noted and I quote:

"When all is said and done, our best hope for achieving sustainable development is through the creation of partnerships."

These partnerships, Sir Lloyd emphasized, were to be at the national level, among the various actors, governmental, non-governmental and private sector, but that partnership was also essential at the regional, inter-regional and international levels. The focus, he said, should be on implementation.

Our gathering here today is a testimony to the enduring strength of Sir Lloyd's vision. Our aim today, is to focus the region and its international partners on those actions, ongoing and to be taken, to achieve the goal of "vibrant societies; resilient economies".

Much has been said and will no doubt be said here today about the on-going international processes culminating in three major high level meetings this year — the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa; the Post-2015 Summit to which I have already referred and the 21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris.

Preparation for these meetings will form the backdrop of our deliberations. The focus of our discussion, however, will be local — very specific to CARICOM countries. We will engage with you in discussion on our priorities as a region and strategies to ensure that our voice is heard and our concerns are reflected in the final outcomes of these meetings.

We look beyond the outcome documents to implementation bearing in mind our unique status as small island developing states. We focus closely on the means of implementation, issues such as access to financing, partnerships, building capacity as well as legal, administrative, statistical and other policy frameworks to support the effective implementation and monitoring of

the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will be agreed on.

We are challenged, as member states and actors in the international community, to commit to and engage fully in these processes that will ultimately shape and protect the global landscape in the post-2015 era.

CARICOM is uniquely poised to facilitate this process with member states working in conjunction with our partners in the private sector, development institutions and civil society groups.

As CARICOM countries work towards the goal of vibrant societies as a platform for the creation of resilient economies, we must depend, first and foremost upon ourselves: upon our peoples, whose ability to survive and thrive in the most adverse circumstances is well-known; upon our civil society and other institutions, whose democratic foundation is at the heart of their ability to be effective; upon our private sector and our entrepreneurs whose legitimate aspirations for commercial success are steered by the invisible hand of which Adam Smith spoke to create what we would today call "public goods"; upon the unique and positive role of our labour unions; and upon our partnerships with industrialised countries and international institutions.

Most important of all, we must continue to be a source of inspiration for the young people of our region.

The distinguished American economist, Joseph Stiglitz, wrote, in his book "Globalisation and its discontents" that

"Developing countries must assume responsibility for their well-being themselves..."

but that international institutions have a key role in making

"Globalisation work, and work not just for the well off and the industrial countries, but for the poor and the developing nations."

That is the partnership that we seek and strengthen today. A partnership for implementation, a partnership to ensure that ours are vibrant societies and resilient economies.

I thank you.