



THIRTY-SECOND INTER- SESSIONAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)



DECISIONS



CHAIRMAN

**Dr. the Hon. Keith Rowley
Prime Minister
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

VENUE AND DATE:

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**INS/HGC/2021/32/5 COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE REGION:
STATUS OF PREPARATION FOR THE ROLL-OUT OF
THE COVID-19 VACCINES**

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/5 entitled “COVID-19 and its Impact on the Region: Status of Preparation for the Roll Out of the COVID-19 Vaccines” and INS/HGC/2021/32/5 Add;

Acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to continue during 2021 and that while some Member States are still in the first wave of the pandemic, others are experiencing second wave/multiple waves;

Mindful that the prevailing science tells us that it will be necessary to achieve Herd Immunity internationally to curb the pandemic and prevent the total collapse of the Region’s economies and boost recovery;

Conscious of the difficulties being experienced by CARICOM Member States with respect to the access and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and the considerable implications for Caribbean citizens and their economies;

Also mindful of the need to ensure that vaccines purchased for the Region are safe and efficacious and meet the World Health Organization (WHO) pre-qualification or Emergency Use List (EUL) criteria, or equivalent criteria by validated (stringent) national regulatory authorities;

Also acknowledging the increased trafficking of substandard/falsified/counterfeit COVID-19 medical products, including vaccines, as a threat to public health;

Recognising that continued surveillance must be maintained given the presence of the UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 (with its higher transmissibility) in some Caribbean countries and the reports that currently vaccines have not yet been proven to stop disease transmission but rather to mitigate the severity of infection;

Also recognising the need for structures and systems to be set in place to ensure a smooth roll out of vaccines;

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THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed that the Chairman of CARICOM will write to the President of the United States of America and the Prime Ministers of Canada and the United Kingdom, expressing the Region's concerns with regard to the inequitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, requesting that, where possible, companies manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines in their respective countries be enabled to sell the vaccines to CARICOM Member States;

Also agreed that the Chair of CARICOM will, on behalf of the Community, request the intervention of the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom and other partners, to support the Caribbean Community's proposal that a Global Summit to address the equitable access to and distribution of vaccines be convened under the auspices of the WHO's Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator;

Further agreed to issue a Statement on access to COVID-19 vaccines;

Urged Member States to remain vigilant and engage in all preventative, surveillance and communication strategies as guided by the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO);

Agreed to establish/strengthen regulatory systems to manage new and emerging COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines and minimise the use of substandard and falsified vaccines;

Mandated CARPHA, in collaboration with the COVID-19 Core Coordination Group, to identify and support the implementation of mechanisms to ensure the procurement, storage and distribution of sufficient, quality, safe, and efficacious COVID-19 vaccine supplies to Member States;

Also urged Member States to ensure the correct systems for safe immunisation of citizens are in place, strengthen national pharmacovigilance systems and collaborate in sub-regional and international reporting mechanisms of Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) through PAHO's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and CARPHA's Caribbean Regulatory System (CRS);

Expressed thanks to CARPHA, PAHO and the CARICOM Secretariat for their continued support to Member States in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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**INS/HGC/2021/32/6 CARIBBEAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND
TRANSFORMATION (CERT)**

Having received an overview of progress made towards advancing the Caribbean Economic Recovery and Transformation (CERT) initiative from the Honourable Prime Minister of Barbados, in Caucus;

THE CONFERENCE:

Affirmed support for the use of a multi-dimensional Universal Vulnerability Index (UVI) along with appropriate vulnerability criteria as the basis for determining access to concessional funding by Small Middle-Income States;

Reiterated the call for –

- (i) a new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a boost to global liquidity;
- (ii) the refinancing of COVID-19 related debt into long-term instruments with fixed lower interest rates and a moratorium of seven (7) to ten (10) years;

Agreed that a team led by the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and including Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana, and representation from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Trinidad and Tobago will undertake resource mobilization as well as seek a guarantor for the issuance of a growth and resilience bond for CARICOM Member States.

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INS/HGC/2021/32/7 CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY:

INS/HGC/2021/32/7.1 Implementation of the CSME

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/7.1 entitled “CARICOM Single Market and the Economy (CSME): Implementation of the CSME” and INS/HGC/ 2021/32/7.1 Add entitled “Draft Summary Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)”;

Expressing concern about the progress made and the outstanding actions still required to advance implementation of the CSME, particularly to support economic recovery;

Noting the progress made with regard to the exchange of technical assistance in the area of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET);

Recalling that the Conference of Heads of Government had agreed on timelines for the priority issues that have been identified to this end;

Recognising the increasing urgency for accelerating implementation and giving effect to the principle of the coalition of the willing and **acknowledging** that the CCJ Advisory Opinion on Opting Out pursuant to Article 27(4) and its implications needed more detailed consideration;

THE CONFERENCE:

Requested that the relevant Organs take the action necessary to give effect to the following initiatives -

1. *With respect to a Supportive Macroeconomic Environment,*

- (i) the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP) to meet urgently no later than April 2021, to resolve the outstanding issues and reach agreement with respect to the CARICOM Financial Services Agreement (CFSA), the Regional Securities Market, the Community Investment Policy and the Credit Reporting;

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- (ii) the Legal Affairs Committee (LAC) to follow up on finalising the Protocol to the Intra-CARICOM Double Taxation Agreement (ICDTA) on Exchange of Information upon Request;

2. *With respect to Digital Transformation,*

- (i) the Special Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED)-ICT to continue to expedite the establishment of the Single ICT Space together with access to reduced roaming rates and enhanced access to broadband;
- (ii) the CARICOM Secretariat to prepare a paper examining the feasibility of establishing a Single Regional Telecommunications Regulator for the consideration of the COTED-ICT and the Forty-Second Meeting of the Conference in July 2021;

3. *With respect to Transportation,*

- (i) the COTED to resolve issues for an effective air transportation system;
- (ii) the COTED to monitor completion of initiatives aimed at building capacity within the Community in support of maritime cargo transportation, particularly for agricultural produce;
- (iii) a study be undertaken to review the status of existing port facilities in Member States, with a view to determining those requiring an update to their facilities. The Secretariat is to approach the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) on the proposed study;

4. *With respect to Free Movement,*

- (i) the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) to complete its consideration of the definitions and modalities of the free movement of agricultural workers and security guards;

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Urged Member States to -

1. *With respect to Boosting Economic Output,*

- (i) implement the CARICOM COVID-19 Agri-Food and Action Plan;
- (ii) remove non-tariff barriers (Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) – Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)) to intra-regional trade;
- (iii) expeditiously conclude the review and revision of the Common External Tariff (CET) and Rules of Origin;

2. *With respect to Free Movement,*

- (i) submit the required recommendations for the simplification of the administrative procedures for Free Movement;
- (ii) provide coverage in their national legislation for all twelve (12) approved categories of skilled CARICOM Nationals;

Mandated the CARICOM Secretariat to:

- (i) immediately prepare and circulate to Member States, a Paper on the outstanding issues and measures for the consideration of the COFAP and the LAC, respectively;
- (ii) expedite the requisite consultation with stakeholders to ensure the finalisation of the development of the Online Companies Registry system for the consideration of the Conference;

Also urged that the private sector and Member States work as closely as possible to achieve the increased production and productivity that are so critical;

Agreed that critical issues that need to be addressed as outlined in the Paper are -

- (i) reasons for the lack of implementation;

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- (ii) requirements for engendering greater responsiveness to and use of the CSME by both Member States and the private sector;
- (iii) the roles of the Organs of the Community in giving effect to the CSME;

Also mandated the Secretariat to submit to the PMSC on the CSME an Action Plan for immediate and longer term action on the way forward for the effectiveness of the CSME, taking into consideration the critical issues and possible Solutions and Strategy as proposed at the Fiftieth Meeting of the COTED (May 2020) as well as effective decision-making processes;

Also agreed that the Lead Prime Minister for the CSME in the CARICOM Quasi Cabinet would take immediate action to contact those Member States which have action overdue, with a view to taking immediate steps towards completing implementation, beginning with the priority areas of:

- Agriculture Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) matters;
- Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA) made operational;
- Protocol on Contingent Rights made operational;
- Previously agreed categories for Free Movement of Persons legislated;
- Administratively implement the decisions on the movement of agricultural workers and security guards;
- Mutual Recognition of Companies;
- CET Review;
- CAPS, Online Companies Registry, LMIS;

Further agreed to consider the Implications of the CCJ Advisory Opinion with respect to the Opt Out Provisions of the Revised Treaty at the Forty-Second Regular Meeting of the Conference in July 2021, and that the Secretariat would prepare proposals to address the attendant issues.

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INS/HGC/2021/32/7.2 Issues Related to the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF)

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/7.2 entitled “Issues Related to the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF)” in Caucus;

Reiterating the important role of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), established by Article 158 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, particularly in addressing economic dislocation and ameliorating or arresting adverse economic and social impact arising from the operation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in disadvantaged countries, regions and sectors;

Recalling the decision of the Conference of Heads of Government to Adopt the Policy Statement for the CARICOM Cohesion Policy, which will become one of the main instruments for fostering economic efficiency and social equity in the Caribbean Community, at its Thirty-First Inter-Sessional Meeting;

Considering the challenges that the CDF continues to face in replenishing its Capital Fund for the second funding cycle (July 2015 to June 2021), both as a result of unpaid contributions from some Member States but also from the failure to attract sufficient/adequate funding from International Development Partners (IDPs) to date;

Recognising the potential impact of funding shortfalls and protracted payment delays on Member States’ programmes and the CDF’s liquidity, financial sustainability and capacity to expand its operations;

Acknowledging that countries with outstanding obligations to the CDF have continued to make payments to the CDF in accord with their commitment to do so in tranches, but would need additional time to completely fulfil their obligations in view of the dire economic and fiscal constraints facing Member States arising from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;

Also acknowledging the expiration of the tenure of the last COFAP-appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of the CARICOM Development Fund, Dr. Sherwyn Williams, a national of Guyana, on 13 July 2019;

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Further acknowledging that the following Member States are eligible to participate in the selection of the Chairperson - **Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines as at the end of January 2021;**

Also recalling the discussions at the Thirty-First Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference (February 2020) where a request was made for the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the CDF to collaborate on the development of approaches which optimise use of the excess liquidity in the Region by way of the creation of a growth and resilience investment bond;

THE CONFERENCE:

Approved a further one-year extension to the CDF's second contribution and subvention cycle to 30 June 2022;

Encouraged those Member States which have not yet done so, to work towards the settlement of outstanding balances on their assessed contributions to replenish the capital fund of the CDF by the end of 2022;

Instructed the CDF to continue its efforts at mobilising funds from International Development Partners (IDPs) and other agencies to assist in replenishing the capital fund of the CDF and **noted** the willingness of the Lead Head of Government on the CSME to support those efforts;

Agreed that the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP) would meet between 21-31 March 2021 to consider a proposal by the CDF on growth and resilience bonds;

Also encouraged those Member States so entitled to nominate candidates for the position of Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the CDF for a non-renewable term of two years for the consideration of the COFAP, and **also agreed** that the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Hon. Gaston Browne, would spearhead the effort for the identification of an eligible candidate to be considered for appointment as Chairperson.

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INS/HGC/2021/32/7.3 Final Report of the Commission on the Economy

Having considered Paper PMSC/CSME/2021/10/6 entitled “Report from the CARICOM Commission on the Economy (“Caribbean 9.58”)” and having received a presentation from the Honourable Prime Minister of Barbados on the recommendations contained in the “Draft Summary Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)” - INS/HGC/2021/32/7.1 Add;

Recalling the mandate given to the re-constituted CARICOM Commission on the Economy (CCE) as a blue-ribbon team of regional and international experts under the Chairmanship of Professor Avinash Persaud, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister of Barbados;

*Noting the Prologue to the Report which sets out a **12-Point Action Plan** in Response to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic;*

*Also noting the following recommendations set out in the Report - “Caribbean 9.58” – **Speeding up the Caribbean**” which proposes that Member States should –*

- (i) **adopt** a test of subsidiarity for all CSME proposals so that the Community may be more focused on a smaller number of issues that could be best done regionally;*
- (ii) **also adopt** an Enhanced Cooperation Mechanism where at least five countries can agree to move ahead on a regional initiative ahead of other countries in circumstances where there will be little or no adverse spillovers for those not moving ahead;*
- (iii) **deliver** freer movement of people and goods through a primarily privately funded fast ferry network facilitated by an appropriate regulatory environment for passengers, cargo transportation and customs administration;*
- (iv) **deliver** greater mobility of labour and skills by making critical changes to the CARICOM Skilled Nationals regime, namely re-classification of a ‘Skilled National’ along with electronic verification of qualifications;*
- (v) **reduce** obstacles to deepening the financial sector by tackling financial conduct regionally through the establishment of a single, independently operated, internationally credible agency to deliver AML certification to entities; and*

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(vi) **work towards** igniting a private sector investment boom in resilience building through the issuance of a new asset class of Growth and Resilience bonds to provide inexpensive, long-term resilience financing;

Further noting the request by Jamaica for more time to consider the Report;

THE CONFERENCE:

Accepted the Report ("**Caribbean 9.58**") as submitted by the CARICOM Commission on the Economy, but agreed that more time is required to consider the Report;

Agreed to the early publication and circulation of the Report "**Caribbean 9.58**" Report;

Mandated the Secretariat to work with the Commission to deconstruct the various recommendations emanating from the Caribbean 9.58 Report and assign them to the relevant Organs of the Community for the formulation of Implementation Plans for subsequent submission to the Forty-Second Regular Meeting of the Conference in July 2021;

Also agreed to the start-up of a region-wide debate (oral and written submissions) on the recommendations within the context of the economic challenges and prospects for the Community to be led by the Chairman and Members of the Commission;

Commended the Chairman and Members of the Commission for their insights, advice, and a generally excellent strategic Report.

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INS/HGC/2021/32/7.4 A Single ICT Space

Having considered the oral presentation on “A Single ICT Space” by the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell, Lead Head with responsibility for Science and Technology (incl. ICT) in the CARICOM Quasi-Cabinet;

Recalling the mandate of the Eighty-Sixth Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED)-ICT, in June 2020, for the Draft Action Plan to fast-track digital transformation to be developed by the Single ICT Space Working Group/ COTED Officials by 31 July 2020;

Conscious that well-defined plans and strategies are important for resource mobilisation;

Acknowledging the integral role of the Single ICT space in the development of the Region, as outlined in the Report on the Commission of the Economy (Caribbean 9.58) and the Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME);

Also acknowledging that digital transformation and development of digital economies have been posited as a key for recovery of country economies and sectors (e.g. Health) post COVID19;

THE CONFERENCE

Agreed that there is need for renewed, demonstrated commitment to the development of the Single ICT Space;

Mandated that the draft Action Plan for ‘fast-tracking’ digital transformation, with well-defined targets and timelines, needed to be finalised by the Single ICT Space Working Group/COTED-ICT Officials by 30 March 2021, to facilitate comprehensive discussion and decisions at the July 2021 Meeting of the Conference;

Also agreed to the re-engagement of the regional telecommunications providers by 15 April 2021.

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**INS/HGC/2021/32/8 ADVANCING THE CARICOM AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS
AGENDA: PRIORITISING REGIONAL FOOD AND
NUTRITION SECURITY**

Having considered Papers INS/HGC/2021/32/8 entitled “Advancing the CARICOM Agri-Food Systems Agenda; Prioritising Regional Food and Nutrition Security”; INS/HGC/2021/32/8 Add. entitled “Proposal for Capitalizing on Regional Poultry Demand” the presentation by the Lead Head of Government responsible for Agriculture, Agricultural Diversification and Food Security in the CARICOM Quasi-Cabinet; and INS/HGC/ 2021/32/7.1 Add “Draft Summary Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)”;

THE CONFERENCE:

Commended the President of Guyana on the work which has been done in developing the strategies to re-invigorate growth and development in the CARICOM agri-food sector;

Endorsed the development of the Region’s agri-food system strategy through strategic partnerships with regional private sector bodies to promote commercialisation of the sector;

Urged Member States to consider the proposal to allocate a specific percentage of locally produced agricultural products to be procured through the public procurement system within Member States;

Also urged Member States to commit to a targeted percentage allocation of Public Spending in the Food and Agriculture Sector;

Supported the implementation of the policy recommendations for fostering the commercialisation of the regional agri-business sector;

Agreed to the establishment of a Special Ministerial Task Force on Food Production and Food Security to follow-up and monitor implementation of the strategy. The Ministerial Task Force will comprise Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago;

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Also agreed to the hosting of an urgent meeting among the PMSC on the CSME, the Special Ministerial Task Force and the CARCIOM Private Sector Organization Inc. (CPSO) to develop and agree on a Road Map/Action Plan;

Further agreed that the Special Ministerial Task Force would report back to the Conference, outlining the specific commodities/products to be targeted, level of investment required, areas of responsibilities, an implementation timeline and the policy reforms that would be required to remove obstacles to the roll out of the Action Plan.

**INS/HGC/2021/32/9 FRAMEWORK FOR A JOINT TOURISM POLICY FOR
CARICOM**

Having considered Papers INS/HGC/2021/32/9 entitled “Framework for a Joint Tourism Policy for CARICOM” and INS/HGC/2021/32/9 Add. entitled “Draft Report of the First Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on Tourism”;

Acknowledging that CARICOM Member States and particularly the Tourism sector have been particularly adversely affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic in terms of revenues, employment, foreign exchange retention rates and currency stability among other economic metrics;

Also acknowledging that the resurgence of the COVID-19 virus coupled with new variants throughout the Region and particularly in the Source markets has led to enhanced mitigation measures culminating in reduced or zero access to said markets;

Noting that there is no consensus on the proposed tourism levy; and the consequential proposal that Member States be given the option to participate in such an arrangement if they so desired;

Also noting the call by Saint Lucia for the strengthening and recalibration of the Regional tourism support organizations to ensure their efficacy;

Recognizing that the incidence of COVID-19 and its impact on the Tourism Sector has created opportunities for recalibration of the industry to meet the challenges of the dynamic operating environment;

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Also recognizing that further work was necessary for the development of a Joint Tourism Policy for CARICOM;

THE CONFERENCE:

Endorsed the recommendations of the PMSC on Tourism as follows:

- **Concurred** with the use of an iterative approach in developing the Joint Tourism Policy for CARICOM where the initial plan would be deemed an Emergency Tourism Plan with a subsequent and more fulsome policy and strategy being developed by the third quarter of 2021;
- **Mandated** the Interim Tourism Working Group (ITWG) to continue working on further developing and finalising the Joint Tourism Policy for CARICOM;
- **Agreed** that the draft Joint Tourism Policy for CARICOM must specifically include elements to address product development, product differentiation, intra-regional tourism, impact on the welfare of workers, protocols for entry of persons who have been vaccinated and, in addition, elaborating on Destination Management Capacity; Strategic Health Mitigation Framework; Use of Technology; Business Support and Public Relations and Communications;
- **Also agreed** that further work be done on the development of a Tourism Reserve Fund including expanding the options for capitalization, ensuring that the application of any levy or contributory framework so designed is applied *pari passu* to both air and cruise passengers originating from outside the Region;
- **Also mandated** that given the urgency and the narrowing window of opportunity to prepare for the expected rebound in travel due to pent-up demand, the operational plan to stimulate tourism's recovery over the next six to nine months be completed and submitted to the next meeting of the PMSC on Tourism but no later than 30 April 2021;
- **Instructed** the ITWG to develop a conceptual framework for a Brand CARICOM which would facilitate the development of a portal to strengthen both the forward and backward linkages across the sectors;

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- **Requested** the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) to advise on the issue of a common protocol for entry for persons who have been vaccinated with the COVID vaccination in the context of quarantine and transmission, as well as how to treat with the emerging COVID variants;
- **Commended** the work of the ITWG comprising representatives from the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the CARICOM Secretariat, the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and the Government of Saint Lucia.

**INS/HGC/2021/32/10 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR,
LABOUR AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

Having considered the submission by the CARICOM Private Sector Organization Inc. (CPSO) and the intervention of the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC);

Noting the information from the CPSO Inc. that it was now fully constituted;

THE CONFERENCE:

Commended the CPSO for the work done on the “Twenty-Five by Twenty-Five initiative”;

Accepted the recommendation from the CPSO that the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED) would dedicate resources to expeditiously conclude the review and revision of the Common External Tariff (CET) and Rules of Origin;

Welcomed the CPDC’S commitment to being a more meaningful partner going forward.

INS/HGC/2021/32/11 SECURITY ISSUES

Having considered Papers INS/HGC/2021/32/11 entitled “Security Issues”; INS/HGC/2021/32/11 Add 1 entitled “Regional Security Brief”; INS/HGC/2021/32/11 Add 2 and “Draft Démarche from the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to the Government of the United States of America”, in Caucus;

Having received a Report from the Chairman of the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) on the several security priority actions being pursued in the Region to strengthen regional law enforcement cooperation and coordination;

THE CONFERENCE:

Welcomed the Report of the Twenty-Second Regular Meeting CONSLE;

Endorsed the proposal for a High-Level Démarche to be mounted by CARICOM to the new US Administration to address, *inter alia*, the negative political fallout from the United States Department of State Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, and the return of a representative from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) to the Southern Caribbean;

Approved the wording of the Démarche in Caucus;

Urged Member States which have not yet done so, to -

- (i) **Adopt** the CARICOM Firearm Roadmap;
- (ii) **Sign** the Agreement Concerning Co-Operation In Suppressing Illicit Maritime And Air Trafficking In Narcotic Drugs And Psychotropic Substances In The Caribbean Area (also known as the Treaty of San Jose);

Reconfirmed the decision taken at its Thirty-First Inter-Sessional Meeting (February 2020, Barbados) that a High-Level Summit of Member States and the regional multi-sectoral partners would be convened as soon as possible in Trinidad and Tobago to focus on violence as a public health issue.

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**INS/HGC/2021/32/12 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SECOND
MEETING OF THE PRIME MINISTERIAL SUB-
COMMITTEE ON REPARATIONS**

Having considered Papers INS/HGC/2021/32/12; and INS/HGC/2021/32/12 Add.1 entitled “Recommendations from the Second Meeting of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Reparations”;

THE CONFERENCE:

Endorsed the decisions of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on Reparations as follows:

With respect to the “Update on Status of the Reparations Issue, including National Task Forces”;

Commended the Commission on the significant outreach activities undertaken and the global impact of its work to-date;

Urged Member States that have not already done so, to re-engage with National Committees and provide the necessary political and financial support for the Committees to function effectively;

Also urged Member States to actively engage youth and the creative community to increase public awareness and commitment and build a broad-based coalition in support of reparatory justice at the national and regional levels;

Agreed to recommit and redouble efforts to pursue reparations on behalf of the people of the Region, in light of the leadership and impetus being given to the global movement for reparations by the CRC; the recent global protests against systemic racism and discrimination; and the reckoning of prominent private corporations and universities with their links to native genocide and slavery, among other opportune developments; and the significant development challenges faced by the Region, arising from the structures inherited from slavery and colonialism;

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Also agreed that the Chairperson of the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on Reparations, in consultation with the Chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), would finalise and dispatch letters to Heads of Government in the African Union, seeking their collaboration to co-sponsor a proposed Summit with European Heads of Government;

Further agreed that the Chairperson of the PMSC on Reparations, in consultation with the Chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), and Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, would upon receiving concurrence, finalise and dispatch a second round of letters to European Heads of Government, at a time to be determined tactically and diplomatically during 2021;

Agreed that the Chairperson of the PMSC on Reparations, in consultation with the Chairman of the CRC, would write to the Prime Minister of the Republic of India to express appreciation for the support of the Indian Parliament for the CARICOM reparations initiative and to indicate a willingness to engage in a dialogue to advance areas of mutual interest in the reparations claim;

Congratulated Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, on being conferred with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Global Award in January 2021 and expressed appreciation for his continued visionary leadership of the reparations movement;

Further urged Member States to advance the decisions of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) on CARICOM's reparations claim, through appropriate channels within the United Nations (UN) system, including leveraging synergies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the International Decade for People of African Descent;

Also agreed that the CRC shall provide an annual report and a biennial work plan and budget for approval by the PMSC. The Secretariat would provide an annual financial statement;

Called upon Member States to fulfill their outstanding financial obligations;

Decisions

With respect to Strategic Direction: The Way Forward,

Mandated the Secretariat to examine the modalities for convening a Summit on Reparations in collaboration with the African Union (AU);

Proposed that the CRC approach the Congressional Black Caucus in the United States, towards a possible collaborative event around Juneteenth (19 June) in 2021;

Agreed that the Chairperson of the PMSC would collaborate with the CRC to mobilise the requisite technical assistance to develop a concept paper on the design, purpose and management of the proposed International Development Fund (IDF);

Also agreed that the CRC Chairman should advance the negotiations with Leigh Day Law Firm towards a possible solution;

Further agreed to the expansion of the composition of the CRC to include representation from, *inter alia*, Rastafari, indigenous people and youth, provided that budgetary resources so permit;

Approved the granting by the CRC of observer status to relevant governments and entities at meetings of the CRC as required, having notified the Secretary-General of such requests in advance.

INS/HGC/2021/32/13 CARICOM AND THE CHANGE OF US ADMINISTRATION: OPTIMISM TEMPERED WITH REALISM

Having reviewed Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/13 entitled "CARICOM and the Change of US Administration: Optimism Tempered with Realism" in Caucus;

THE CONFERENCE:

Reiterated the importance of approaching the United States of America (USA) as a united Community with a common platform;

Decisions

Mandated the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) to proceed along the lines of the blueprint proposed by the Community Council and the Caucus of Ambassadors in Washington DC;

Agreed to a broad approach to engagement with the USA beyond state-to-state relations to include academia, private sector, labour, and the Caribbean diaspora;

Also mandated that every effort should be made to engage the new US Administration at the various levels including at the level of Head of Government once sufficient groundwork is laid;

Also agreed that the Region should also engage with Congressman Gregory Meeks, Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee and other members of Congress;

Further agreed that the Bureau of the Conference will monitor progress in this regard and advise on a possible timing of a CARICOM-USA Summit.

INS/HGC/2021/32/14 UPDATE ON THE SITUATION IN HAITI

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/14 entitled “Update on the Situation in Haiti” and having received a Presentation from the President of Haiti, His Excellency Jovenel Moise in Caucus;

THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed to issue the **following** Statement:

STATEMENT BY THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY ON HAITI

Heads of Government expressed their deep concern over the deteriorating political situation and the deepening public anxiety over citizen security in Haiti.

Decisions

They took note of the Report of the United Nations Secretary General of 11 February 2021, and of the comments therein on the political and governance issues.

Heads of Government underlined the importance of respect for the rule of law and constitutional processes as laid out in the CARICOM Charter of Civil Society, and the primary responsibility of the Government to this end.

They called on the political actors to engage in dialogue to reach consensus on the way forward and establish an enabling environment for the conduct, as quickly as possible, of the elections to renew the lapsed Legislative and Local Government Institutions.

Heads of Government look forward to the conduct of free and fair Presidential Elections, in accordance with the Constitution of Haiti.

25 February 2021

Mandated the Secretariat to urgently constitute a small expert group to report on the situation on the ground in Haiti.

**INS/HGC/2021/32/15 CONSIDERATION OF THE EIGHTH BIENNIAL
REPORT ON ADEQUACY OF THE CARIBBEAN
COURT OF JUSTICE TRUST FUND**

THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed to defer the Item to its next Meeting.

INS/HGC/2021/32/16 BORDER ISSUES

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/16/ entitled “Border Issues” in Caucus and having received updates by the Prime Minister of Belize and the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on the border issues between those Member States and the neighbouring States of Guatemala and Venezuela respectively;

THE CONFERENCE:

➤ ***With respect to Belize-Guatemala***

Agreed to include the **following** Statement in the Communiqué of its Thirty-Second Inter-Sessional Meeting -

BELIZE-GUATEMALA RELATIONS

Heads of Government were informed of the progress of Guatemala’s Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim (Guatemala/Belize) at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and noted that Guatemala has filed its Memorial and that Belize has until June 2022 to submit its Counter Memorial.

Heads of Government urged Belize, Guatemala and the Organization of American States (OAS) to continue implementing fully the existing Confidence-Building Measures.

Heads of Government recalled that both countries and the OAS had committed to design a mechanism of co-operation for the Sarstoon River, and called on them to redouble their efforts to this end.

They recognised the significant role of the OAS in the process aimed at resolving the dispute, and called on the international community to increase support for the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone.

Heads of Government reiterated their unequivocal support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Belize.

Decisions

➤ ***With respect to Guyana-Venezuela Relations***

Agreed to include the **following** Statement in the Communiqué of its Thirty-Second Inter-Sessional Meeting -

UPDATE ON GUYANA/VENEZUELA CONTROVERSY

Heads of Government welcomed the decision made by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 18 December 2020, that it has jurisdiction to entertain the Application filed by Guyana on 29 March 2018 and noted that it paves the way for the ICJ to consider the merits of the case concerning the Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela). Heads of Government expressed their disappointment over the rejection by Venezuela of the decision of the Court.

Heads reiterated their concern over the issuance of decree No 4.415 on 7 January 2021, which claimed for Venezuela sovereignty and exclusive sovereign rights in the waters and seabed adjacent to Guyana's coast. The subsequent illegal interception and detention, in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Guyana, of two Guyanese registered fishing vessels and their crew members by a Venezuelan naval vessel on 21 January 2021 were condemned.

Heads noted with satisfaction that the cumulative effort of the Region contributed to the unconditional release by Venezuela of the fishing vessels and crews.

Heads expressed their full support for the ongoing judicial process that is intended to bring a peaceful and definitive end to the long-standing controversy between the two countries and urged Venezuela to participate in the process.

Heads remained very concerned about the threatening posture of Venezuela and reaffirmed their consistent support for the maintenance and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana.

Decisions

**INS/HGC/2021/32/17 RECRUITMENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY**

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/17 entitled “Recruitment of the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)” in Caucus;

THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed to the following process:

- (i) A call for nomination of candidates should be opened immediately after this Inter-Sessional Conference, not later than the end of February - and closed by end of March. That would provide a full month for candidates to emerge;
- (ii) The Community Council, through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Member States, should seek nominations from qualified nationals of Member States and these should be transmitted to the Chair of the Community Council not later than 31 March 2021;
- (iii) A Special Meeting of the Community Council, to consider applicants and determine recommendations to the Conference, should be convened as early as possible after the closure of nominations and not later than 15 April;
- (iv) The principle of geographical rotation should, in the interest of equity, be taken into account in selection of the Secretary General;
- (v) A Special meeting of the Conference should be scheduled for the end of April or early May 2021 to decide on the appointment of the next Secretary-General of CARICOM;

Noted that a decision early in May 2021 would allow a period of transitional information sharing between the outgoing and incoming Secretary-General.

Decisions

INS/HGC/2021/32/18 AMENDMENT TO THE ROTATION SCHEDULE

THE CONFERENCE:

Having considered Paper INS/HGC/2021/32/18 entitled “Amendment to the Rotation Schedule (Requested by The Bahamas)”;

THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed to the amendment to the Rotation Schedule to allow Belize to assume the Chairmanship on 1 January 2022 with The Bahamas assuming the Chairmanship from 1 January 2023.

INS/HGC/2021/32/19 DATE OF THE FORTY-SECOND REGULAR MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE (ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, JULY 2021)

THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed that its Forty-Second Regular Meeting would be held in Antigua and Barbuda, 5-6 July 2021.

INS/HGC/2021/32/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

INS/HGC/2021/32/21.1 Presentation by the Premier of the British Virgin Islands, Honourable Andrew Fahie

Having received an oral presentation by the Premier of the British Virgin Islands, Honourable Andrew Fahie;

THE CONFERENCE:

Agreed to include a Statement in its Communique as follows:

Decisions

**STATEMENT BY THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY ON
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS**

Heads of Government received a letter from the Premier of the British Virgin Islands which apprised of the announcement on 18 January 2021 of a Commission of Inquiry (COI) “to establish whether there is evidence of corruption and abuse of office or other serious dishonesty” in the British Virgin Islands. The COI was ordered by the then sitting Governor.

Heads of Government are cognisant of the disquiet that has arisen among the people of the British Virgin Islands about the establishment of the COI. Further, the Heads of Government are dismayed at the manner in which the COI was established with no consultation, or prior communication, between the UK government and the duly-elected government of the British Virgin Islands.

Heads of Government noted the strongly-expressed concerns on this matter by the British Virgin Islands government, which concerns were also shared by other Associate Members of the Community.

25 February 2021

