

REMARKS DELIVERED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY EDWIN W. CARRINGTON
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
AT THE AGRICULTURE DONOR CONFERENCE
2 JUNE 2007
PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

His Excellency the President of Guyana, Honourable Bharrat Jagdeo Lead Head of Government for Agriculture in CARICOM

The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished Director-General, FAO, Dr Jacques Diouf

Distinguished President of the Caribbean Development Bank, Dr. Compton Bourne

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Representatives of our Partner Countries and Donor Organizations

Members of Delegations

Assistant Secretary-General, Regional Trade and Economic Integration and Other Staff of the Secretariat

Special Invitees

Representatives of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen:

- It gives me great pleasure in welcoming you to this Agriculture Donor Conference of the Caribbean Community being held in Trinidad and Tobago. We thank the Government of Trinidad and Tobago once again for hosting yet another Community endeavour. On this occasion it is doing so in relation to a matter

involving food and nutrition security – a matter of global concern – but let me not run ahead of myself.

- In 1989, when Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community met in Grande Anse, Grenada, they recognised that the traditional international trading arrangements were on the eve of dramatic change. We were at the mid point of the Uruguay Round negotiations and already there were clear signs that the preferential markets for agricultural products which the Region enjoyed were under threat. We were also on the eve of the creation of the European Single Market with the impending change in the marketing conditions for the Region's bananas.
- Our Leaders recognised then, that it was necessary to deepen "regional economic integration through the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy in order to achieve sustained economic development based on international competitiveness, co-ordinated economic and foreign policies, functional cooperation and enhanced trade and economic relations with third states". **[Quote from preamble of Revised Treaty]**
- Hence the Community embarked on its flagship project to create the CSME in which agriculture features prominently. This was not a day too soon as many of the dangers feared have been realized – loss of preferences, resulting in loss of markets, of income, of employment, etc in banana, sugar – leading to increasing poverty, especially in the rural areas and particularly among women.

- The Preamble of the Revised Treaty of Chagaramas which lays the legal foundation for the CSME, states the Community's determination "to effect a fundamental transformation of the agricultural sector of the Community by diversifying agricultural production, intensifying agro-industrial development, expanding agri-business, strengthening the linkages between the agricultural sector and other sectors of the CSME and generally conducting agricultural production on a market-oriented, internationally competitive and environmentally sound basis".

- The CSME provides the opportunity for production integration and cross border investment in agricultural production. For example, Belize, Guyana and Suriname are large land masses with abundant natural resources and tremendous agricultural potential. When we factor in the tourist demand for food supplies in the other Member States, we can more than double our potential consumer market in the region. Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago are important sources of capital investment for the Member States with an abundance of natural resources.

- The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas provides the policy basis for the transformation of the agriculture sector. Much work has been done by the Community, with assistance from our regional partners to translate the policy into an enabling environment to allow for additional investment in and the transformation of the agricultural sector.

- The constraints to such transformation have been identified. These include:

- **Limited financing and inadequate financing;**
- **Inefficient marketing systems;**
- **Poor development of research and transfer and technology;**
- **Fragmented and unorganised private sector;**
- **Outdated and inefficient agricultural health and food safety systems;**
- **Deficient and uncoordinated risk management;**
- **Inefficient land and water management systems;**
- **Inadequate transportation systems;**
- **Paucity of skills and human resources.**

We have determined that the removal of these constraints will greatly facilitate and encourage the private sector to invest.

- Now we need the support of our donor partners in removing the constraints to transforming the sector. Hence this Donor Conference.
 - This Conference is expected to mobilise donors and other key partners as we put forward the Region's strategic approach and plan for the development of the agriculture sector.

- We need your support to put agriculture on a sustainable path of development. Later this morning, we will present to you an integrated package of proposals. These proposals are a response to the perceived gaps in the agricultural sector and will go a long way in addressing the constraints to transformation of the sector.

- This Conference will provide an opportunity for our Heads of Government, our Ministers of Finance and our Ministers of Agriculture to interface **with you, our development partners**, and will allow for agreement on a Way Forward which we anticipate will lead to the financing of the critical thematic areas identified in the Integrated Package. This is a major step in a continuous process to identify projects and programmes which when implemented will lead to the development of the Region's Agricultural Sector.

- With these brief remarks it gives me great pleasure now to introduce to you Dr. Jacques Diouf, Distinguished Director-General of the FAO a true friend and partner of the Caribbean Community – a brother – and invite him to address us.

6 June 2007