

**ADDRESS  
BY**

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***"CARICOM BEYOND THIRTY:  
CONNECTING WITH THE DIASPORA"***

**CARICOM 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY LECTURE**

**BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2003**

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In order to commemorate its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, CARICOM decided to undertake a year-long programme of activities throughout our Region.

Our central theme in these Distinguished Lectures:

***"Towards the Further Enhancement of  
Caribbean Civilisation"***

Although this is the Seventh in the Series, it is the first being delivered outside our immediate borders. Although I am in Brooklyn, I know of no West Indian who would not here feel truly at home.

I regard this as a special privilege for several reasons:

As one who was then engaged at the Ministerial level in the architectural design of the Caribbean Community and as a witness to the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973, I am proud that we now represent the longest surviving model of regional integration in the developing world.

I am pleased as the incumbent Chairman to inaugurate, by virtue of this Lecture, a new chapter to forge a close and dynamic partnership between all the people of the Caribbean – those who dwell within our shores and those of the Diaspora who currently reside abroad.

By fortuitous coincidence, I am here at a moment when a son of the Caribbean, Honourable Julian Hunte, Foreign Minister of St. Lucia, has been chosen to preside over the 58<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, when the United Nations is faced with its most serious challenge to promoting a global order where all mankind can

dwell on a single Planet in peace and harmony – where through collective decisions we can create a global economic system that ensures the equitable sharing of the resources of Mother Earth.

We cannot subscribe to a world where might is right and the strong are free to break every rule and hallowed practice of international Law.

We must resist any global economic system which allows the rich and powerful to condemn those who are small and weak, to a perpetual state of poverty and underdevelopment.

The united voice of the Caribbean will join the chorus of developing countries who are assertive in the demand for a just, peaceful and equitable world where we are no longer expected to be satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the Masters' tables.

It is most appropriate that here in New York, I should remind this audience that when we speak now of Caribbean people, Haitians are not just our neighbours, but they are full members of the family. For the Caribbean Community of which I speak is no longer Anglo-centric.

Having embraced Suriname within the Community nearly 10 years ago, we have now welcomed as our newest Member, a nation of 6 million people.

Haiti was the first black Republic in the Western Hemisphere, a nation which was born in the overthrow of slavery and colonial rule.

It was an achievement of immense significance in the history of the Caribbean and symbolized its unrelenting quest for freedom and equality.

On the verge of the celebration of its bicentennial of independence, we salute Haiti and the Haitian people and their achievements. They have struggled many years over a long and difficult road in a hostile world of discrimination.

Today, Haiti faces enormous challenges for economic and social development. Indeed, it is in dire need of international assistance but, over recent years, the donor community has imposed a virtual embargo on assistance and cooperation with Haiti which has severely damaged its prospects.

Now that Haiti has subscribed to the fundamental principles on which the Community rests, CARICOM seeks to assist them in the process of building those institutions which are required to ensure a true and lasting democracy. We cannot condone their isolation which only breed further poverty and misery for the Haitian people.

Mr. Chairman,

The concept of forging closer links between the countries of the Caribbean is more than a century old.

The birth of CARICOM, 30 years ago, signalled the intention of its founders to combine the existing and potential resources of a people who share a common vision and history in order to realise their promise and possibilities.

Since then, as is the case in much of human experience, the integration movement has witnessed progress but also suffered reverses. No one can pretend that all our aspirations have been fulfilled, nor that the institutions and machinery for implementing decisions have been flawless.

But what remains incontrovertible is that if regional integration was an option three decades ago, there is absolutely no valid alternative today.

Nowhere else on the Planet is there a region where the encounters between people of different cultures have been as challenged to make sense of human existence in modern times as in the Caribbean. The encounters between Africa, Europe and Asia and they in turn with the indigenous Native Americans (Caribs, Arawaks, Tainos) have resulted in a dynamic interplay so as to produce a new and unique people, shaping what many of us describe as a *Caribbean civilization*.

It was a French Caribbean author, Edouard Glissant, who wrote the Caribbean "Has no myth of origin". What it enjoys is a myth of relations.

So whether African, Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Lebanese, Jew or the various mixtures which exist, "all a we is one".

Based on this premise, I assert that the job of building the kind of Caribbean Society we desire is not restricted to those who are physically located within the geographic confines of the Caribbean sea.

The "people" boundaries of CARICOM are not confined to the physical boundaries of our regional homelands. The living boundaries of CARICOM are to be found wherever CARICOM nationals or their progeny reside and work.

As the incumbent Chairman, I bring you the clear message that the West Indian diaspora communities abroad are within the demographic and cultural boundaries of CARICOM. We want to have overseas West Indians fully engaged with the rest of us in consolidating Caribbean regional integration.

The time has come for both sides of the connection, the diaspora and home region, to work together to realise the full potential of a dynamic relationship.

But that effort has to be grounded in a proper understanding and knowledge of this connection. Those of us who are physically based in the Caribbean need to deepen our knowledge of the diaspora: Equally the diaspora needs to know and understand itself and be conversant with all the developments back home.

## **STUDIES AND RESEARCH ON THE DIASPORA**

Several scholarly studies have been done of Caribbean intra-regional and extra-regional migration, the well-spring of the West Indian diaspora. These studies document the different waves of migration that have taken place from the West Indies since the nineteenth century.

Of course, when one looks at trends in the different diaspora communities which were born out of West Indian migration, interesting differences in patterns become apparent.

We are seeing important contrasts between the dynamics of the West Indian diaspora community in the United Kingdom, on the one hand, and those of the community in North America on the other.

Following the strong wave of West Indian migration to the United Kingdom from the 1950s into the early 1960s, the introduction of restrictive immigration laws choked off the flow considerably. In later years, significant numbers of West Indian immigrants in the UK relocated to Canada and the United States. There has been remigration, back home to the West Indies, especially of persons who have reached retirement age.

In contrast with the trends in the United Kingdom, it is the West Indian Diaspora community in North America, especially the United States that reflects the greatest ferment in terms of growth and potential.

In 1990, the number of immigrants in the United States who were born in the Commonwealth Caribbean was nearly 787,000. About 78% of this number were under the age of 50, and 61% had high school education or above. So this was a community which would have been engaging in dynamic economic and educational pursuits up to the present.

The West Indian diaspora does not consist only of those who actually migrated from the Caribbean. Second and third generation progeny, born in the host country, are an important component of the diaspora, depending on their socialisation and their general life experiences.

## **FORCES BEHIND WEST INDIAN MIGRATION**

Apart from the numbers, what are the considerations that make the West Indian diaspora and its original home region mutually important to each other?

The underlying social and historical forces that shaped West Indian societies have resulted in their citizens displaying a high propensity to migrate.

Every human being is driven by an innate need to survive.

Faced with a social and economic milieu that historically lacked the capacity or the interest to create adequate space for everyone, many West Indians have been constrained from the earliest of times to seek opportunities outside their countries and their region.

They moved to the tobacco and cane-fields of Cuba. They helped to build the Panama Canal. They are to be found in many countries of Central America. They have moved in great waves to Europe, Canada and the United States to overcome the colonial legacy; in response to the dynamics of demography, and the existing constraints of human, financial and institutional resources.

We will only stem the tide, when we expand our economies, increase professional and job opportunities and accentuate social mobility fast enough to satisfy the growing expectations of our people.

All this can be spurred from the benefit of the added synergy to be gained from regional integration and progressive social policies which will in time substantially reduce lack of opportunities as a push factor.

Even then, as we move to create a Free Trade Area for this Hemisphere, we must accept that persons will continue to move across national frontiers.

Our approach to the development of our human resources must take this into full account. We must accentuate our training particularly in those areas of high external demand so that we produce enough Doctors, Nurses, Teachers, Security Officers, Engineers to satisfy our domestic requirements and yet cope with the pull factor of attractive competing job opportunities abroad.

## **THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DIASPORA AND HOMELAND**

Given the circumstances of migration, what will keep a diaspora engaged with its homeland or home region?

I think we must distinguish between a "passive" diaspora and an "engaged" diaspora.

The "passive" diaspora simply reflects the objective fact of the existence outside a country or region of people who had their origins in our homeland. They are not characterised by a persistent backward glance towards home. In contrast, the hallmark of the "engaged" diaspora is the persistence of "connectedness" through time with home or with the idea of home.

The "connectedness" of the "engaged" diaspora manifests itself through one or more of several ways.

The first factor, independent of all other considerations, concerns the purely emotional.

Most West Indian migrants retain a special place in their hearts for the village, the town, the city, the country, or indeed, the region where, in common parlance, his or her "navel string is buried." This evokes the notion of rootedness, not only in concrete material terms, but also of the soul and the psychic dimension of being.

The process of socialisation in migrants' homes and in West Indian groupings overseas also serves to imbue second-generation and third-generation members of the West Indian diaspora with this sentiment.

There remains an emotional attachment to sustain connectedness.

A substantial proportion of West Indian migrants leave dependent relatives or other financial obligations behind. Many migrants retain a strong interest in social, political and economic affairs back home.

Indeed it was from this great city that the visionary and prophetic Marcus Mosiah Garvey spread the gospel of Pan Africanism and espoused the dignity of the black race.

W. A. Domingo launched from here the Jamaica Progressive League as a forerunner to the Peoples National Party and before the Barbados Labour Party was spawned.

These factors which help sustain the connection of West Indian migrant groups with home are also the engine behind another interesting phenomenon in West Indian migrant behaviour: namely the relative frequency with which many members of the diaspora move back and forth between the host countries and their original homelands. This is particularly so for those migrant groups that are located in relatively nearby areas such as the Eastern and Southeastern seaboard of the United States. Flying home to the Caribbean from these areas is a matter of anything from 1½ hours to 5 hours.

When this easy access is combined with the increasingly frequent appearances of West Indian popular musicians and other performers before diaspora audiences, we have a powerful force at work helping to sustain connectedness and keeping the West Indian diaspora fully engaged.

## **EXISTING PATTERNS OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN DIASPORA AND HOME**

Numerous charitable initiatives are undertaken every year by groups of West Indian nationals, highly organised or spontaneous, to help relieve pressing social needs back in their respective Caribbean homelands.

Many are the Children's and Old people's Homes that have been assisted, hospital wards that have been equipped, school programmes that have been strengthened, through this manifestation of charitable support by the diaspora.

Many go further and return home to give freely of their professional time in myriad of skills.

We expect that this philanthropic spirit in the overseas West Indian community will long survive and grow from strength to strength.

Overseas West Indians have for some time now been channelling some of their savings into financial institutions in the region. Building societies in the Caribbean have been able to establish strong organised linkages with West Indians abroad, and attract resources into their operations.

Over time members of the West Indian diaspora have also over time built up and maintained foreign and local currency deposits in banking institutions in the region.

The foreign currency deposits increase the capacity of the local banks to provide needed foreign currency loans to local businesses to finance expansions and production for export.

Central Banks have come in recent times to have a growing appreciation of the strategic role of the flow of migrant remittances back to their homelands.

We should also recognise the part played by "remittances" in kind, or the "barrel phenomenon", which has received very little attention in research and analytic work. Numerous migrant dependents back home rely as much on the goods sent home regularly to them in these barrel consignments, as they do on actual cash remittances.

The positive contribution of these flows cannot be overstated.

On the social dimension, migrant remittances in cash and kind comprise a significant part of the implicit social safety net of the country, supporting consumption at adequate levels, and thereby providing stimulating injections into various sectors of the economy.

## **THE CHALLENGE TO INTENSIFY CONNECTEDNESS**

The already existing levels and intensity of diaspora engagement are indeed encouraging. But I am convinced that we can build on the currently prevailing patterns to move to even greater and more exciting possibilities. This is obviously so with respect to the linkages of Caribbean national migrant groups directly with their respective national homelands. But it is equally so with respect to diaspora engagement with the Caribbean Community as a whole.

We hope and expect that the West Indian diaspora, by virtue of their identity, will sustain a strong abiding interest in the development of the CARICOM region, and will become fully engaged in that development. But if this involvement is to have any long term viability, it must be on the basis of mutuality of benefit.

## **DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AT THE LEVEL OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY**

As CARICOM countries intensify their drive to constitute themselves into a true Community, we want the people of the West Indian diaspora to see themselves as belonging to this Community.

We need to build a solidarity between the people of the Caribbean who have a commonality of interests because they are confronted with a similarity of challenges.

Our concern to involve West Indians abroad in the progress of CARICOM integration has for long been an abiding preoccupation. One of the most explicit and far reaching expressions of this preoccupation was the intensive and widespread consultations that the West Indian Commission conducted with the diaspora in the UK, Canada and the U.S.A. in the early 1990s.

What is the nature of this community of states we are building in CARICOM, with which we want the diaspora to be fully engaged? For a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is not simply about feting – it should also be a pause to chart a more exciting period ahead. The next steps on the journey must serve to further our mission.

When I assumed the Chairmanship of CARICOM at its thirtieth anniversary summit meeting in Jamaica three months ago, I tabled a document, "*CARICOM Beyond Thirty: Charting New Directions*" in which I offered my own perspectives on the way forward for the Community. The Rose Hall Declaration, issued by the Heads of Government at that summit meeting, also made firm commitments on a range of fundamental issues for the strengthening and deepening of CARICOM.

A primary concern is to retrofit CARICOM, within the context of the pressures and challenges from a unipolar world which threatens to marginalize us.

Globalisation is merciless - it acknowledges no historical indebtedness - it presently affords no protection to the weak. The preferential arrangements on which our countries have traditionally relied have been subject to vehement attacks in various multilateral trading fora.

Our region accounts for 0.27% of total world trade.

Today, the gulf between the rich and poor is widening. More than 80 countries now have seen a drop in per capita incomes during the last decade. The income gap between the fifth of the world's population living in the richest countries and the fifth in the poorest was 74 to 1 in 1997, up from 60 to 1 in 1990 and double where it stood in 1960 - 30 to 1.

Robin Hood used to rob from the rich to give to the poor. The global market economy is causing the exact reverse.

In Cancun, a united CARICOM with 14 votes uttered a single message. We were part of the chorus which did not bring music to the ears of the developed world.

We are not prepared to sell our birthright for what is not even a mess of pottage. We do not beg for charity. We insist on the design of a New World Economic System where we are a meaningful part of the directorate and allowed to secure international economic rules must allow arrangements which protect our farmers, our manufacturers and thereby improve living standards for our people.

- We see as CARICOM a collective instrument for mitigating the vulnerability of our individual small states: vulnerability to political pressures from powerful interests in the wider world; vulnerability to trade, economic and financial shocks from the global marketplace; vulnerability to the impact of natural and man-made disasters.

- CARICOM must be a collective institutional instrument for the joint expansion of output and employment of its people, and for reducing or mitigating the costs they must bear for good governance and vital social services.
- CARICOM must provide a milieu for nurturing and strengthening our shared collective identity as a people, whether resident in the region or dispersed in the diaspora, giving us the psychic capacity “to stand tall with confidence before and in the world.”

We are in the process of creating one common and enlarged economic space out of the several small economies of the region: a CARICOM Single Market and Economy in which there are -

- no tariff or non-tariff barriers against the movement of eligible goods;
- no barriers to the provision of services across national boundaries in the Community;
- freedom of movement, in the first instance, for defined groups of qualified workers that will eventually extend to other CARICOM nationals living in a Member country or residing in the diaspora
- and no obstacles to the movement of capital from one member state to another;
  - or to the right of establishment of CARICOM investors in any member state.

We invite you in the diaspora to share this vision of our evolving Caribbean Community and

to participate in its construction: a Community of freely moving peoples; to our shared commitment to sound democratic principles, the rule of law, and to the consolidation of civil society in the governance of our societies; a Community anchored in a common economic space for investment, production, and trade; a Community of shared values, where a sense of self and society is rooted in a strong regional consciousness.

It is this vision that Members of the West Indian diaspora are being invited to embrace the wider CARICOM as an enlarged homeland, where they can find, or even initiate, synergies for cultural and productive action that generates profitable returns for all.

It was West Indian Nobel Laureate Sir Arthur Lewis, a true Caribbean man who managed to remind his regional compatriots that:

*"Music, literature and art are as important a part of the heritage of mankind as are science and morals. They differ from science in that they do not represent what is, but are products of the creative imagination. They have, therefore, infinite scope for variation. And yet, they tend to be distinctively national in character... This is the essential and most valuable sense in which West Indians must be different to other people".*

Our history of slavery, indentureship, colonialism and the continuing threat of post-colonial dependency require the sovereignty of both intellect and imagination, collectively and individually, for the second emancipation in which the reformed CARICOM must play a significant and decisive role.

We must turn ,then, to key points of cultural empowerment to unlock the potential of our Caribbean population.

The advent into CARICOM membership of Haiti and Suriname and the interest on the part of the Hispanic Caribbean in being involved, immediately dictate extension of sports activities beyond Sabina, Kensington and Bourda. Athletics (in which the English-speaking Caribbean nationally rather than regionally excel) and Football (Soccer) in which all Member-States of CARICOM have an expressed interest (if vying for the World Cup is any guide) and American baseball and basketball which are well established in the Hispanic Caribbean all come to mind.

Sports Academy(ies) nationally, sub-regionally and/or regionally. These should be established to engage a future generation not only to develop performance skills in the game but as part of the overall building of individual character, to fostering serviceable values and attitudes, and promoting frequent and better encounters with fellow-Caribbean compatriots, at home and abroad, resulting in the appreciation by the young generation that the Caribbean is "*one world to share*".

Why should we not have sports facilities for Spring training? What about the professionals engaged in the promotion, management, training, physical fitness, medical care, broadcasting of sporting activities with our natural advantage of warm temperature weather all year round?

The **Performing Arts** have by and large escaped the threat due to world-class excellence of many of its Caribbean exponents and the tremendous potential they have presented themselves to add to the GNP.

Together, West Indians in Toronto, London, New York or Miami can work with us to carve out a distinct niche in what is now termed "*Cultural Industries*" with music (live and recorded) being the flagpole entity it is.

This can provide huge inflows of foreign exchange through performances (e.g. Sunfest and individual superstars in concert) or state-of-the-art recording studios as exist in Jamaica and once existed in Montserrat before the volcano.

Calypso and Reggae from either end of the region are highly marketable commodities.

Popular music, from calypso through zouk to reggae/dancehall, belongs to the mass of the population and are *regional* expressions whatever their original places of origin. It is not by accident that the names of Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Peter Tosh from Jamaica, the Mighty Sparrow and David Rudder from Trinidad and Arrow from Montserrat, are so well known.

Theatre Companies like the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, the Little Theatre Movement of Jamaica and other theatre groups serviced by playwrights from all over the region, Dance Companies like the NDTA of Jamaica, Storytellers like Paul Keens-Douglas and Louise Bennett both serving our diaspora on both sides of the Atlantic, are Caribbean entities with worldwide fame.

The Caribbean literary achievement is itself second to none. There have been Nobel Laureates for Literature in the recent past – in the persons of Derek Walcott and Vidia Naipaul; novelists of the ilk of George Lamming and Earl Lovelace; poets a-plenty from Suriname's Martin Dobru, through to Guyana's Martin Carter and Barbados' Kamau Brathwaite to Jamaica's Lorna Goodison, Cuba's Carpentier and Nicolas Guillen and the great many others who through the magic of their imagination have over the past half a century reminded us that there is a logic and a consistency to being Caribbean. The heritage must not be lost and we should not deprive the diaspora from exposure and contributions to the rich creative cultural energy of the region.

The dialogue and literature surrounding cricket constitute a well established icon of Caribbean identity.

We know only too well how quickly the feeling of West Indians, many of whom know little about the intricacies of the game, can soar with the victory of the W. I. Cricket Team and sag into despair at the prospect of defeat. Here in the diaspora, cricket remains a great symbol of uniqueness and also a source of bringing our people together.

In 2007, the Caribbean will host the World Cricket Cup – the greatest event of any kind which we have ever staged. Many of you will be coming to watch the games. But it is more than a spectacle – it is serious business.

Companies from all over the world are bidding for a piece of the pudding. Why should our people in the diaspora not seek to be engaged in the vast array of professional and entrepreneurial aspects which these Championships require?

Admittedly, Cricket speaks mainly to the English speaking Caribbean by reason of its past and development.

Here is another opportunity for constructive engagement with the diaspora.

### **INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR STRENGTHENING CONNECTEDNESS**

None of this can happen without effective enabling institutional arrangements on both sides, or without adequate information flows and opportunities for networking.

Within the context of a revised CARICOM Treaty, all member states are now engaged in implementing a comprehensive legislative programme to create the necessary legal framework for the Single Market and Economy. This legal framework will move the idea of a common economic space among CARICOM countries from concept to reality.

The Caribbean Court of Justice is essential to provide an original Jurisdiction and to enable the development of a Caribbean jurisprudence which is impossible when the Final Appellate Court is an external one.

Within this enabling environment, there must be high quality operational institutions which can command the confidence of the diaspora and attract its members to become involved with them.

Here, in particular, the soundness of financial institutions are at issue. In the particular case of Jamaica, we have in recent years undertaken a comprehensive overhaul and strengthening of financial legislation and regulations.

The Banking System, Building Societies and the Insurance Industry have now come under greatly enhanced supervision.

We must promote as the first line of defence a culture of prudence within the individual financial entities themselves.

It will also be necessary to have well managed corporate vehicles, outside the financial sector, operating in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy to encourage the profitable placement of diaspora investment in these financial entities.

Institutional development will also be necessary on the side of the diaspora communities. I look forward to the time when vigorous leadership will concentrate within the diaspora for the creation of substantial corporate institutions based on the migrant community, including investment vehicles that can aggregate diaspora savings for prudent and profitable investment back home in the Caribbean. I also visualise a scenario in which business and organisational talent based in the region will invest in diaspora institutional development, and vice versa.

Returns on such investments within CARICOM can prove equal to or better than what is offered by the metropolitan markets.

One possibility could bring everything together: indulging the sense of West Indian belonging; engaging with CARICOM regional development as a whole in addition to following individual national attachments, and securing competitive returns on investments placed in the region through sound operational institutions.

All these elements could be satisfied by means of a bond issue by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), specially designed and marketed to the West Indian diaspora.

The CDB, which enjoys triple A rating, has acquired solid experience over many years of going to the market for funds. We need to examine the feasibility of a special bond issue for the West Indian diaspora, or alternatively, of suitable strategies to get West Indians abroad to tap more fully into its regular bond issues.

In the same vein, more of the bonds issued abroad by individual CARICOM Governments could be taken up by a cross-section of the West Indian diaspora, and not by just those diaspora members who are nationals of the issuing country.

## **THE LOBBYING POTENTIAL OF THE WEST INDIAN DIASPORA**

But we must, however, extend beyond finance and economics the connection of the West Indian diaspora with its CARICOM home region.

The West Indian diaspora communities constitute a formidable force for the advancement of Caribbean interests in their host countries. We do not need to be apologetic or diffident about this.

West Indian migrant communities abroad should not feel that they are doing a disservice to their host societies if they defend Caribbean interests in the political systems of their host countries. Indeed, action to protect Caribbean interests can also promote vital interests in their host countries on subjects where we share common concerns.

After all, the Caribbean is for the United States its Third Border. In the U.S.A., we are able to observe outstanding examples of effective national or ethnic lobbying groups at work: the pro-Israel Jewish lobby, and the Cuban-American lobby that so heavily influences US national policy on Cuba. These and similar groups are single-minded in their pursuit of the interests they defend.

No one can fail to notice the increasing intensity with which local political concerns impact on national policy through the representative process.

West Indian migrant communities in the U.S.A. reflect a high degree of geographical concentration, particularly in New York and Florida. This presents us with the possibility of aggregating numbers locally to form active constituencies around particular issues for feeding into the political process.

These pre-disposing factors by themselves will not necessarily provide the required results.

The members of the diaspora generally need to get actively involved in local politics, as voters, organisers, petitioners.

They need to feel impelled to understand and articulate Caribbean interests. This has to be fostered through appropriate educational, information, and communication initiatives.

There is a concomitant need for the CARICOM side at the national and regional levels, to define, articulate and communicate the relevant issues in clear terms, and to invest in the necessary organisational and programme arrangements to do so.

Commensurate organisational development is required on the diaspora side. We therefore encourage national groupings in the West Indian diaspora to come together to advance concerns that are of common interest to all CARICOM countries; concerns relating to key trade and investment issues; concerns over developments in US immigration policy; concerns touching on vital security matters arising from the US-based nexus of the narcotics trade, gun-smuggling, and criminal deportees.

## **SELF RELIANCE**

In the past I have advocated a strategy of concentric diplomacy in which I have argued that we must seek to establish ever widening circles of cooperation, beginning with our partners in CARICOM. This will extend to the wider Caribbean, the Latin American region, the hemispheric system and ultimately the international system in groupings and organisations such as the Non Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 developing countries and the UN system. At the same time, we must also seek to promote co-operation with the developed countries on the basis of mutual respect.

When the leaders of the region signed the original Treaty of Chaguaramas on July, 1973, they were in effect expressing a vision and a commitment to embark upon a more self-reliant path of development at the regional level, based on the belief that the region as a whole could effectively pool its collective economic strength for the benefit of its people. This is the ideal to which the original signatories of the Treaty committed themselves and which we as their successors must continue to nurture.

The reality is that a concerted programme of economic integration and functional cooperation provides the surest means for the countries of the region to optimise their development potential and thereby establish the basis for promoting the well being of their people.

The Governments of the region have reaffirmed their faith in the ability of the region to be self-reliant.

For what is Caribbean integration all about?

It is about maximising territorial integrity, optimising development possibilities, thereby increasing our influence in the international community and ultimately ensuring respect for our people.

We have for too long ignored the fact that our Community disposes of a range of resources unmatched by any 'economic entity' of similar size in another part of the world.

Our region possesses large quantities of bauxite, petroleum, natural gas, gold, diamonds, vast agricultural and forestry resources as well as significant tourism infrastructure and relatively well developed human resources.

It is for this reason that the CARICOM Heads of Government, during our recent meeting held in Montego Bay, decided to establish a high level group of experts to identify opportunities for promoting production integration and the necessary policy and institutional arrangements to support such a programme.

This initiative is an important complement to the efforts to establish the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

While the Single Market and Economy will provide a framework for the seamless movement of factors of production, the Group of Experts will aim to provide a strategic vision for the combined utilisation of resources and capacities in order to optimise the development potential of the region and thus increase the welfare of its people. For this is ultimately the *raison d'être* of our Community.

Indeed, our people have demonstrated their ability to compete internationally – whether in administration, in literature, in music and the arts, in sports, notably cricket and athletics.

From Trinidad and Tobago has come the only new musical instrument of the last century – the melody of the steel band.

Our Community has also produced outstanding sons and daughters – including three Nobel Prize Winners in Arthur Lewis, Derek Walcott and Vibia Naipaul.

Kim Collins, born in the nation with our smallest population, led the pack of 100 -metre sprinters in Paris.

The Bahamian women won gold in the 4x100 relay at the Sydney Olympics

In a land where there is no snow, the Jamaican Bobsleigh team is a centre of world curiosity.

Brian Lara holds the record for the highest score in both Test and First Class Cricket

No bowler has captured more Test wickets than Courtney Walsh.

Not bad for a region of our size. Indeed, these represent outstanding achievements.

## **SOME THOUGHTS FOR ACTION**

The observations I have presented here tonight, are intended as a contribution to the ferment of debate and discussion about the future of the Caribbean Community and of the connection between the Community and the West Indian diaspora.

They do not claim to be a definitive blueprint.

Perhaps my own observations can also contribute to the overall frame of ideas from which an action agenda can be drawn for consolidating the diaspora as an integral part of the life of the Caribbean Community. Indeed, as we mark the thirtieth year of CARICOM, this would be an opportune moment to bring new and intensified effort to bear on this question.

Let me end with a few suggestions, as we contemplate the unfolding of a widespread effort to sustain the mutual relevance to each other of the diaspora and the Caribbean Community.

In this connection, I would like to first commend the scholars and their institutions, who have been directing well-needed research attention to the dynamics of West Indian migration and diaspora behaviour.

They have done much valuable work on the subject already, but everyone will accept that considerably more needs to be done. I want to encourage Caribbean scholars to maintain their efforts in this regard, and maintain a comprehensive programme of research and analysis on West Indian migrant flows and their communities abroad.

I would also suggest that an initiative be taken to convene a major symposium, or a series of symposia, on the challenges of sustaining a dynamic and productive connection between the Caribbean Community and the West Indian diaspora.

The University of the West Indies has been conducting an annual Mona Academic Conference on important regional policy issues, and this suggested symposium could take the form of one of these Conferences.

I have elsewhere proposed that the UWI and the CARICOM Secretariat collaborate with each other and with key organisations and resource persons in the diaspora to mount such a symposium, and I am assured that the University will be addressing the matter.

I also think it would be useful to have a CARICOM/diaspora business conference incorporated within the frame of the symposium or organised as a separate exercise.

The symposium and the business conference which I have suggested would certainly provide the diaspora with opportunities for expressing their ideas and providing inputs to policy development within CARICOM.

We can look for other ways of securing diaspora participation, such as admitting representatives of the diaspora to appropriate *fora* of CARICOM. Indeed, in the context of the contemplated reform of the Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians, we can explore the desirability of admitting diaspora representatives to that forum.

I have also sought to stress the importance of two-way flows in the diaspora connection with the region. There is an appreciable one way flow of artistic presentations and popular performances from the Caribbean to the diaspora, especially in the US. I believe that everything should be done to encourage a reciprocal flow.

My last observation touches on the crucial issue of maintaining diaspora interest and involvement beyond the first generation members. I perceive of a diaspora that will persist through time, well after replenishment through new migrant arrivals will have dwindled.

There are outstanding cases of other diaspora groups which have been able to maintain the intensity of conscious connection to a homeland, without depending on substantial numbers of new arrivals. Clearly, the process of socialisation of the children of migrant families has much to do with this.

There is considerable room for fruitful collaboration between Caribbean Governments and organisations on the one hand, and diaspora interests, on the other, to produce a range of multi-media materials that would assist West Indian migrant homes in undertaking the necessary socialisation of offsprings into West Indian consciousness.

## **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is clear from all that I have said that the connection between the West Indian diaspora and our West Indian home is alive and dynamic. Yet, even so, there is enormous potential still to be tapped in the relationship.

The future of the engagement of the diaspora with our CARICOM home is pregnant with rich possibilities, and beckons us with exciting promise. We must use the existing interaction between both sides as a springboard to propel the connection to a greater level of maturity where we are all mutually enriched in a milieu of stronger unity.

Together, as we seek to forge an inseparable partnership, let us create real opportunities for self fulfilment by all the people of the Caribbean and thereby convert our dreams into a welcome reality.

I thank you.