

**Remarks by Consul General of Saint Lucia
Mr. Henry Mangal
on behalf of
Caribbean Consular Corps (CCC)
At CARICOM'S 51st Anniversary Flag Raising Ceremony
*Legislative Assembly of Ontario - Queen's Park
111 Wellesley Street West, Toronto, Canada
Wednesday 3rd July 2024***

Today we have come to celebrate fifty-one (51) years since the revolutionary leaders of Caribbean integration gathered at Chaguaramus, Trinidad and Tobago to sign the Treaty which brought CARICOM into being. This pioneering act by Prime Ministers Errol Barrow of Barbados, Michael Manley of Jamaica, Forbes Burnham of Guyana, and Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago; has earned them a permanent place of reverence and gratitude from the people of the Caribbean.

Those four (4) founding fathers were imbued with a passion and had a mandate from other national leaders and people across the Caribbean to pursue the vision of integration for the region. The clarion call was: ***One People, One Vision, One Destiny***; and from this emerged our Caribbean Community, CARICOM.

The main objective of CARICOM was to overcome our history of colonization, exploitation, and marginalization; and take control of our destiny, by shaping our own policies, principles, and institutions of integration. That is why CARICOM is so concerned about the economic and social development of the region and the security and prosperity of our people. CARICOM relentlessly pursues its development goals and

engages in positive and principled development discourse with the international community. CARICOM has also been a leader in advocating on the major issues of our times, helping to shape public opinion and policy worldwide, and even changing the trajectory of history, to secure justice, equality, fairness and freedom.

When the polarized world was proceeding to unjustly isolate Cuba, it was the founding fathers of CARICOM who stood up and took a principled and non-aligned position, recognizing Cuba as a Caribbean sister-nation. And on that occasion, it was then Barbados Prime Minister – Errol Barrow – who captured the conscience of the world with the simple, courageous, and confident statement, that we are “friends of all, but satellites of none.”

When the developed world was attempting to legitimize the apartheid white-minority regime in South Africa, CARICOM played a pivotal role at the Commonwealth and in the United Nations, to keep that pariah government isolated internationally, paving the way for the unjustly imprisoned to be liberated, and for the black-majority to rule in a truly democratic South Africa. So, we proudly claim some responsibility for ensuring that Nelson Mandela the illegitimately imprisoned, became Nelson Mandela the legitimate President of South Africa, and arguably one of the greatest leaders in World history.

And today, CARICOM is leading the call for Climate Justice for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), whose economies, infrastructure, and the livelihoods of their people, are being destroyed by climate change

disasters they did not cause. As with its previous calls for justice, this CARICOM appeal is resonating globally and with persistence will soon result in the right actions being taken.

The passage of Hurricane Beryl this week through the Caribbean, is leaving a trail of devastation and death in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Carriacou, and Petit Martinique, and possibly Jamaica, Haiti and Cuba. This brings into sharp focus, the extent of our vulnerabilities which have been exacerbated by the actions of our developed neighbours to the northeast and northwest. It is your carbon emissions which are warming up the planet and bringing more ferocious storms, hurricanes, floods, and other extreme weather events upon us. It is therefore your responsibility to more substantially support CARICOM Island States in building resilience to this existential threat to our region.

CARICOM also continues to be unrelenting in its call for reparations from Britain and other European nations for the genocide of native West Indians and the enslavement of captured Africans on West Indian plantations. Our people have been psychologically traumatized, economically-disadvantaged, and socially disempowered by slavery, which is described by the United Nations as the most atrocious crime against humanity in history. However, the perpetrators of slavery and their descendants have not been held accountable or owned up for this atrocity. In fact, upon the abolition of slavery, they were even rewarded or “compensated for loss of property and income” as it was put then.

That is why the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have established a CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), which is supported by National Reparations Committees set up in each CARICOM country to mobilize support for and secure reparatory justice for our people.

CARICOM is a serious and reputable integration movement with a proud record of achievement and with noble and sustainable development goals. CARICOM has fifteen (15) Member States and five (5) Associate Member States. It encompasses a population of over sixteen (16) million people from the Bahamas, Jamaica and Haiti in the north to Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and Suriname in the south, with St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Grenada in the centre, Belize in the west and Barbados in the east.

CARICOM is a global leader in creating institutions to ensure economic development, enhance education, safeguard health, protect our assets and livelihoods, administer our laws, and guarantee our security. These include the CSME, the CDB, and the CDF on the economic side; the UWI and the CXC on the education front; the CARPHA in health; the 5Cs (CCCCC), CDEMA and the CCRIF on the asset and livelihoods protection side; the CCJ in the administration of justice; and the RSS to protect our citizens and our society.

Historically, Canada has been a reliable development partner of CARICOM. Under the former Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and its various projects, Canada made significant investments in the

Caribbean in infrastructure, education, health, and other critical areas. Canada also contributed to regional travel at the commencement of the precursor to CARICOM – the West Indies Federation – with the donation of two (2) sea vessels – the Federal Maple and the Federal Palm - to transport people and goods between the islands.

Today however, while Canada continues to contribute to Caribbean Development, there is need to increase its quantum of investment and hence its transformative impact. Thankfully, a new conversation between Canada and CARICOM has commenced and is re-energising the Canada CARICOM development partnership. This includes the easing of visa requirements for trusted travelers for several CARICOM nations and the initiation of a Skilled Trades recruitment and training programme via the Caribbean Consular Corps. We applaud Canada for its positive contribution to Caribbean society and for its excellent engagement with CARICOM.

We also applaud the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for its working arrangement with the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, and we expect that this arrangement would cause you to consider and advance development issues of mutual benefit to CARICOM and Canada.

CARICOM citizens are proud, productive, and resilient people. We always strive for excellence, and it is the norm for us to punch above our weight. In 1976 at the Montreal Olympics, a CARICOM National – Trinidadian Hasley Crawford won the gold medal in the 100 metres. Another CARICOM National – Jamaican Don Quarrie also won the silver medal in that same event.

In 2008, 2012 and 2016, Jamaican superstar Usain Bolt won individual record-breaking gold in the Olympic 100M and 200M, and team gold for Jamaica in the 4X100M relay. At the same Olympics, Jamaican sensations Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Elaine Thompson accomplished the same feat in the women's events. In 2012, Grenadian Kirani James also won Olympic Gold in the men's 400M.

These are just some of CARICOM's gold medal achievements in only one sporting discipline. In Cricket, the West Indies has won four (4) World Cups and was undefeated World Test Champion for fifteen (15) years. And if I were to report on other sports and fields of endeavour, my remarks this morning may never come to an end.

Therefore I will conclude with this call to the people of the Caribbean, to continue pursuing the CARICOM integration goal to its logical conclusion of free movement of people; and to protect the gains already achieved.

Long Live CARICOM!

Long live Canada CARICOM Cooperation!

Long Live CARICOM Global Influence and Partnerships!

I thank you.