



Ministerial Statement
Sen. the Hon. Michael M. Fahy, JP

35th Regular meeting of the Conference of Heads

Wednesday June 23rd 2014

Madam President, thank you for this opportunity to advise this Honourable Chamber of the recently held 35th Regular meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community.

Madam President, I was privileged to have been asked to represent our Premier at a meeting of Heads of CARICOM countries, held in Antigua from 1st through 4th July, 2014.

The meeting presented the first opportunity for this Government to join other CARICOM heads of Government to discuss issues of mutual concern. You would be aware that Bermuda is an Associate member of CARICOM, and together with our status as a UK Overseas Territory, our contributions to the discussions are by necessity measured.

Member countries were well represented at the meeting, with delegations from Antigua and Barbuda, our gracious hosts, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Associate Members Anguilla and Turks and Caicos. In addition to member states,

a number of associated institutions were in attendance, including the Caribbean Development Bank, Caribbean Development Fund, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the University of the West Indies. So as you can see **Madam President**, the meeting was well attended with a comprehensive range of representation.

Madam President, the meeting had a rather ambitious agenda of 31 items. In order to address such an agenda, meetings regularly lasted into the late hours of the evening. A primary focus of the discussions was on a proposed Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community for 2015 - 2019. The Conference approved the plan that will see a restructuring of the Secretariat of CARICOM.

The Conference also agreed a set of key priorities, designed to achieve sustainable economic growth and development for member states. Some of the key priorities include.

- The acceleration of implementation and use of the CARICOM single market economy.
- Human Capital Development.
- The advancement of health and wellness.
- Citizen security and justice.
- The Development of a Single ICT space; and,
- Foreign Policy Coordination

Much time was also devoted to a proposed CARICOM - Canada Trade and Development Agreement. To the disappointment of many members, the Trade Agreement has not been concluded.

Madam President, the legal status of Marijuana is an issue that is not unique to Bermuda. It is an issue of interest to the entire region. The Conference endorsed a Terms of Reference for a regional Commission on Marijuana. Understanding the significant costs to independent nations of maintaining diplomatic representations across the globe, the conference considered options for sharing representations.

In this regard, the Conference endorsed the establishment of Joint Missions in a centre of strategic interest by two or more Member States; co-location; the provision of protocol services to visiting Heads of Government in countries where they do not have diplomatic representation; and the representation of CARICOM interests by one CARICOM Member State on a rotational basis in Capitals where several CARICOM Diplomatic Missions were already established.

Special features of the Meeting were presentations by the Prime Minister of Spain and by the Foreign Minister of Cuba. The former clearly came to seek support from CARICOM for Spain's bid to secure a seat on the United Nations Security Council for the period 2015-16. It was clear that many member states enjoyed a warm relationship with Cuba. Many benefited from financial and technical support provided by Cuba.

Madam President, it is now for us to assess the value of our membership and to ensure that we achieve benefit. It is very likely that the greatest benefit could be achieved at the Departmental or operational level. This is something that we will

continue to assess and to do so will encourage our operational units to become more involved.

Thank you, Madam President.