

Second Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee

3 April 2013

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

JOINT DECLARATION

1. The Parliamentary Delegations of the CARIFORUM States Legislatures and the European Parliament, chaired by Senator the Honourable Vasant Bharath, Trinidad and Tobago, celebrate the holding of the Second Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. As set out in Article 231 of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the CARIFORUM States and the European Community and its Member States the role of this Committee is to monitor and review the implementation of the Agreement, and to be a forum for members of the European Parliament and the CARIFORUM States Legislatures to meet and exchange views.

2. The Committee adopted its Rules of Procedure, another important step in the setting up of this Parliamentary Committee, which is part of the institutional framework under the EPA. Members stressed the importance of having all the institutions in place for the proper functioning and monitoring of this Agreement. Particular reference was made to the Consultative Committee, the only Joint Institution for which membership is yet to be established. The Committee urged fulfilment of this requirement.

3. The Parliamentary Committee welcomed the outcomes of the Second Trade and Development Committee, held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 27 September 2012, as well as the Second Meeting of the Joint CARIFORUM-EU Council in Brussels, Belgium on 26 October 2012. Among the decisions taken was the amendment of the EPA in order to allow for incorporation of the commitments of The Bahamas into Annex IV of the EPA, which addresses Investment, Trade in Services and E-commerce. The Parliamentary Committee also took note of issues related to the treatment of certain goods of importance to CARIFORUM, urging both Sides to continue to work to bridge differences.

4. The EPA was recognized as a very important tool to promote export-led development and economic growth, in light of the opportunities to be had in the EU market. The upcoming planned review of the EPA was seen as an important opportunity to assess the gains and challenges from the Agreement's implementation to date.

5. Both Sides expressed their commitment to the effective implementation of the EPA, a partnership for sustainable development, regional integration and the creation of new commercial opportunities between CARIFORUM and the EU. In that regard they called attention to the considerable importance of the CARIFORUM Region's cultural industries, including education, sport, national heritage activities, training and exchanges, which are an asset of the Region and of the EU. This is one of the single

largest growth areas with respect to export earnings, especially at a time when there has been significant reduction in traditional revenue streams. The EPA was recognized as being of critical importance in the Region's strategy to further promote and commercialise the creative and sporting sectors. The Committee thus stressed the importance of the implementation of the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation, as a way to bring the two regions closer to each other. The Committee further noted that different actions and measures should be considered to develop it further, such as twinning projects between creative cities in both regions and the setting up of an EU-CARIFORUM Platform for the Culture and Creative Industries.

6. The Committee underscored that while the Agreement opens up new possibilities as regards the movement of persons, especially for qualified professionals, through possibilities of temporary presence of natural persons for business purpose and mutual recognition of professions, as laid out in Articles 80-85 of the Agreement, in practice regulatory barriers impinge on the realization of the Agreement's stated aims in this regard; thus posing challenges to translating market access into real market penetration. However, Members strongly welcomed and supported the proposal to lift the visa requirements for nationals of CARIFORUM States visiting the EU including the Outermost regions as an important measure to facilitate exchanges.

7. Parliamentarians emphasised that the development component is an integral part of the EPA, and that the Agreement should contribute to the achievement of the MDGs, as well as to regional cooperation and integration. The considerable reduction of funds available under the 11th EDF, as well as EU policy on differentiation in future development aid, must carefully take into consideration the implications for the economic development of the Caribbean and should not jeopardize its capacity to implement the EPA. While the EU has signalled that it will take into account the concept of vulnerability and the status of CARIFORUM States in the application of differentiation, it must indicate how it proposes to do so. The Parties acknowledged that graduating countries solely on the basis of GDP can negatively impact on the issues of poverty, good governance and democracy.

8. The Committee agreed to hold the next meeting in early spring 2014 in Brussels, Belgium.

Caribbean Delegation to the
CARIFORUM - EU Parliamentary
Committee

Vasant BHARATH
Chair

European Parliament Delegation to the
CARIFORUM - EU Parliamentary
Committee

David MARTIN
Head of European Parliament Delegation