

**PRESS CONFERENCE CONVENED BY SENATOR THE  
HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON, MINISTER OF  
FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS (AG),  
ON 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018 AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AND CARICOM AFFAIRS TO ADDRESS ISSUES RELATED TO  
THE 18<sup>TH</sup> SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF  
CARICOM HEADS ON THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND  
ECONOMY (CSME)  
TO BE HELD IN PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
FROM 03<sup>RD</sup> TO 04<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2018**

**A. The Reason for the Special Meeting**

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the opportunity to host the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) which is expected to address critical issues regarding the implementation of the CSME.

At their 39<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting held in Montego Bay, Jamaica from 04-06 July, 2018, in recognition of the need to keep focus on the CSME, CARICOM Heads agreed that a Special Meeting of the Conference on this matter would be held in 2018 in Trinidad and Tobago. During the Meeting CARICOM Heads reviewed the operation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and reiterated the need to accelerate its implementation by placing

greater focus on advancing those areas which would help to create enabling support measures for a competitive Single Market.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley, informed CARICOM leaders in July that Trinidad and Tobago is available to host this Special Meeting. It should also be recalled that at the 38th Regular Meeting of the Heads of Government in Grenada in July 2017 Prime Minister Rowley requested that a Special Meeting should be convened to treat with this matter. Also, it was during Dr Rowley's maiden address to the Conference at the opening of the 37th Regular Meeting of the Heads of Government in July 2016 in Guyana that he urged regional leaders to return the CSME to CARICOM's "active agenda".

#### **B. (i) The history of the CSME**

Functional cooperation, in various aspects, has been pursued by countries in the Caribbean since the beginning of the twentieth century. From the early efforts to create a political union which led to the establishment of the West Indies Federation (1958), to the deeper and more structured engagements of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) (1965), to the more sustained measure of regional integration through a Caribbean Community (1973).

For its Member States, CARICOM offered prospects for Caribbean economic development. It came into being on 4

July 1973 with the signing of the *Treaty of Chaguaramas* by Prime Ministers Errol Barrow for Barbados, Forbes Burnham for Guyana, Michael Manley for Jamaica and Dr. Eric Williams for Trinidad and Tobago. That Treaty was later revised and the Community is now governed by the *Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community Including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)* which was signed by Heads of Government in 2001.

The *Grand Anse Declaration* set the blueprint for the creation of a Single Market and Economy, as the Community attempted to position itself to respond to the anticipated challenges and to take advantage of trends in the global arena. It symbolised a new era, embodied in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

In January 2006, a new era in the history of CARICOM was ushered in with the formal launch of the CSME in Jamaica at the Mona Campus of The University of the West Indies (The UWI). The highlight of the ceremony was the signing of the document entitled “Declaration by Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community Marking the Coming into Being of the CARICOM Single Market” by the Heads of Government of Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines joined the Single Market several months later.

Haiti is a party to the *Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas* and is a member of the Single Market. At present, the CARICOM Secretariat is engaged with the Government of Haiti to determine the remaining steps to be taken to implement the components of the Single Market and the time-frames within which the legislative, regulatory and administrative actions could be taken (immediate, medium and long term). This approach aims at integrating Haiti into the CSME.

The Bahamas does not participate in the Single Market. Montserrat is a British Dependency and is not legally empowered to undertake commitments in respect of the Single Market arrangements.

**(ii) Where are we today**

Today, the operations of the Single Market have been further strengthened by several other mechanisms which support the vision articulated 29 years ago in Grand Anse, Grenada.

The progress under the Single Market is due in no small measure to a number of regional institutions that have been established to support the initiative. Among them are: the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) whose objective is to provide legal certainty to the operations of the CSME. The Court, inaugurated in 2005, has two jurisdictions – Original for interpretation of the Revised Treaty and Appellate as the final

court of appeal in all matters. CARICOM member States that participate in the Single Market subscribe to the original jurisdiction of the Court.

Other institutions have been established that set the standards, for example, for trade in goods under the CSME. These include the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), and the Caribbean Agricultural Health Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), while the CARICOM Competition Commission is geared at promoting competition and protecting consumers from firms abusing their dominant position in the Market.

The CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), which was established to provide financial or technical assistance to countries, regions and sectors disadvantaged due to the operations of the Single Market, began its operations in 2009.

Since the Single Market became operational, the free movement of skilled CARICOM nationals has moved from five initial categories to ten. Those nationals, issued with Skills Certificates as required by the regulations, can move without the need for work permits, as envisaged by the *Grand Anse Declaration*.

Already, the CSME has had an impact on the lives of citizens and businesses. The latter utilise the Right of Establishment, Movement of Service Providers and Technical, Supervisory and Managerial Staff regime to enhance their operations.

As the Community seeks to advance the Single Market, work is continuing on a number of legislative actions and other reforms that Member States need to take in the areas of institutions, regulations and administrative arrangements in the five core regimes of the CSM – free movement of goods, free movement of capital, free movement of skills, free movement of services and the right to establish a business, for example. Progress is also ongoing in the harmonization of commercial type legislation, as well as in the regulatory and supporting areas such as competition, consumer protection, intellectual property and harmonization of product standards.

In framing the *Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas*, certain areas were identified for further elaboration within the scope of the Single Market such as government procurement; trade involving free zones; free circulation; and electronic commerce. Work is being done in these areas to inform regional policy.

Other support measures have been implemented by Heads which require national policy and implementation.

### **C. The Benefit of the CSME**

The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) is an enlarged market which offers:

- more and better opportunities to produce and sell goods and services and to attract investment;
- greater economies of scale; and
- increased competitiveness; full employment and improved standards of living for the people of CARICOM.

The ultimate goal of the CSME is to provide the foundation for growth and development through the creation of a single economic space for the production of competitive goods and services. The CSME is at the heart of CARICOM's economic integration. Moreover, economic integration is one of four pillars on which CARICOM rests in pursuit of its objectives. The other three pillars being foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security. These pillars underpin the stated objectives of our Community -

- to improve standards of living and work;
- the full employment of labour and other factors of production;

- accelerated, coordinated and sustained economic development and convergence;
- expansion of trade and economic relations with Third States;
- enhanced levels of international competitiveness;
- organization for increased production and productivity;
- achievement of a greater measure of economic leverage;
- effectiveness of Member States in dealing with Third States, groups of States and entities of any description; and
- the enhanced coordination of Member States' foreign and foreign economic policies and enhanced functional cooperation.

Like other areas of work in the CARICOM integration process, the implementation and operation of the Single Market and Economy are being undertaken by a number of stakeholders; principal among them are the CARICOM Secretariat, Members States and Community Institutions. At the CARICOM Secretariat, the Development and Operation of the CSME Work Programme seeks to develop, articulate, implement and harmonise policies and programmes throughout the Community, so that people of the Community could enjoy the stated benefits of the CSME.



**D. Some of the likely Items on the Agenda**

Suffice it to say that the Agendas for meetings of the Conference are not public documents however, at their Regular Meeting in July in Jamaica, CARICOM Heads agreed that the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee (PMSC) on the CSME would meet quarterly to guide and invigorate the implementation process. The first such Meeting was held in September 2018 and emphasis was placed on what is practical and achievable over the next twelve (12) months.

**E. The Administrative Arrangements for the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads to be held in Port of Spain on Monday and Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

In October the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs established a Planning Committee comprising officials from other Ministries, Government Departments and Agencies, as well as other stakeholders, for the purpose of organising the Special Meeting of Heads. The venue for the Meeting is the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre. Trinidad and Tobago is continuing to collaborate with the CARICOM Secretariat to ensure that all the necessary preparations are in place and that the Meeting proceeds smoothly. We look forward to welcoming all the Delegations to the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM and to hosting them here in Trinidad and Tobago.

*CARICOM and Caribbean Affairs Division  
Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs  
28<sup>th</sup> November, 2018*