

## **CUBA TO CARICOM: WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU**

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana) Cuba will never forget the brave step in 1972 by the then four independent Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to establish diplomatic relations with their fellow Caribbean state.

This was emphasised by His Excellency Raul Castro Ruz, President of Cuba as he spoke at the Opening Ceremony of the Fourth CARICOM-Cuba Summit at the National Academy of the Performing Arts (NAPA), Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The Cuban President said it was the action of President (Forbes) Burnham of Guyana and Prime Ministers (Honourable Errol) Barrow of Barbados, (Honourable Michael) Manley of Jamaica and (Honourable Eric) Williams of Trinidad and Tobago which opened the way for relations based on mutual respect.

He announced that one of Cuba's biggest events, the International Book Fair, will be dedicated to the Caribbean People, their authors and their work to mark the 40th Anniversary in 2012 of the establishment of diplomatic relations. He said the celebration would take place in Havana and all of the capital cities of the other provinces in Cuba.

President Castro also hailed as new and better integration the advent of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) which was launched in Caracas, Venezuela last weekend. He said that the Caribbean Community's experience in building an integration movement would be very useful in assisting the "nascent organisation" - CELAC.

The topic of climate change was highlighted in the President's address and pointed out that Cuban scientists had cited the issue of sea level rise as an urgent problem for his country. He said they had indicated that by 2050, 2.3 per cent of Cuba's landmass would be submerged by the sea and at least 79 coastal areas would be affected. President Castro expressed his concern that the areas affected in his country would be larger and urged that the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Durban, South Africa find fair and balanced solutions to the problems caused by climate change.

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