



**REMARKS BY
HONOURABLE DR. DENZIL DOUGLAS
PRIME MINISTER OF ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF
GOVERNMENT
OF THE
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**

**AT THE OPENING OF
THE FOURTH CARICOM-CUBA SUMMIT**

**8 DECEMBER 2011
PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Your Excellency, Raul Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba

Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and our Gracious Host

Other Colleague Heads of Government and Heads of Delegation of CARICOM Member States

Secretary-General of CARICOM

Other Distinguished Guests

Delegates

Members of the Media

Excellency, on behalf of the CARICOM Delegation, let me begin by saying that it is with great pleasure that we are meeting with you, today in our beautiful Member State, Trinidad and Tobago. Three years ago we met in historic Santiago de Cuba and today, we meet in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - the country of the historic signing of the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community. Today, we mark the Thirty-ninth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the four then independent countries of the English-speaking Caribbean and the Republic of Cuba. The signing on 8 December 1972 of the agreement establishing diplomatic ties with Cuba was a bold undertaking by the late, President Burnham, and Prime Ministers Barrow, Manley and Williams which sent a statement to the world that these Members of the then Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) considered Cuba an integral and vital part of the Caribbean.

Mr. President, since the establishment of these relations, the CARICOM-Cuba relationship has remained robust and has survived an ever-changing hemispheric and international geopolitical environment. CARICOM remains convinced that advancing cooperation with Cuba, at all levels is in our interest in the face of a series of phenomena which threaten our basic viability and compel us to cope with them with determination.

It is in this context that a year ago, CARICOM Foreign Ministers met with your Foreign Minister, His Excellency, Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parilla for their third Ministerial Meeting in Havana. That meeting allowed both sides to review the relationship between

CARICOM and Cuba and to propose measures for continued collaboration to confront the many challenging issues faced by our countries, including Climate Change and the hindrance posed by the global economic crisis on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President, as small States with limited resources, it is imperative that we pool our efforts and stand behind common principles in order to advance our objectives. Those principles include adherence to the United Nations Charter and for us, in particular, adherence to the principles of the self-determination of peoples; of non-interference in the internal affairs of States; and of upholding the rule of international law.

It is in keeping with these principles that CARICOM has remained resolute in its camaraderie with Cuba and in its firm stance of calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo of the Republic of Cuba. CARICOM therefore takes the opportunity of this Summit to again urge the Government of the United States of America to heed the overwhelming call of the members of the United Nations to lift with immediate effect, the unjust economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against the Republic of Cuba.

Your Excellency, this Fourth Summit provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our shared Caribbean identity and our commitment to South-South cooperation in the promotion and protection of our common values and interests. It also affords us the opportunity to advance our discussions on strategies for confronting the challenges to the sustainable development and welfare of the peoples of CARICOM and Cuba.

As we embark on our deliberations, we are assured of the further strengthening of the friendly and fraternal relationship which has been forged between CARICOM and Cuba over these past 39 years.

Viva CARICOM-Cuba!

Thank you.