

## IX SUMMIT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### DECLARATION OF ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

#### “Innovating integration through the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean”

**We, the Heads of State and/or Government of the Member States of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), gathered at the IX Summit of the ACS, in the city of Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023:**

- i. **Aware** of the exceptional time in which we find ourselves characterized by multidimensional challenges, among which climate change and Post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery stand out;
- ii. **Convinced** that the establishment of multi-actor partnerships such as the one promoted through South-South and Triangular cooperation, play a fundamental role in the development of ACS Member States, fostering and promoting actions, projects and cooperation programs of high added value that contribute to sustainable development and the well-being of our populations while strengthening ties of collaboration and articulation between development partners, whose characteristics, challenges and areas of opportunity are similar;
- iii. **Aware** that the revitalization process of the ACS laid the foundations to boost cooperation among Members and development partners of the Greater Caribbean region to forge the "New Normality" based on cohesion and socio-cultural, economic, technological/digital and environmental among others;
- iv. **Resolved** to promote and effectively implement the ACS Plan of Action 2022-2028 as a flagship product of the revitalisation process to achieve greater resilience to threats and greater preparedness to take advantage of opportunities, through the active engagement of our countries and the achievement of results;
- v. **Resolved to reaffirm** the validity and relevance of the Nature, Goals and Functions established in the Articles of Agreement of the ACS and its importance as a consultative, cooperative coordinating and consensus-building body to advance the unity and integration of the Greater

Caribbean, whose aim is to identify and promote the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at:

- (a) Strengthening, utilising and developing the collective capacities of the Greater Caribbean to achieve sustainable development through South-South and Triangular cooperation, supported by multi-stakeholder and multi-level alliances (SDG, 17), in areas of mutual interest such as education, culture, economic reactivation, trade, sustainable tourism, social affairs, migration, science, technology, innovation, the environment and climate change;
- (b) Promoting the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea and its resources within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 14 of the 2030 Agenda through strategic alliances;
- (c) Strengthening the process of regional cooperation and integration of the Greater Caribbean, in order to establish an expanded economic space that will contribute to increased competitiveness in international markets and facilitate the active and coordinated participation of the region in multilateral fora; and
- (d) Facilitating the active and coordinated participation of the region in multilateral fora.

## **WE DECLARE:**

### **Article I Revitalisation and Strengthening of the ACS**

- 1. Recognise** the revitalisation of the ACS, initiated with the mandate emanating from the Havana Declaration in 2016, as an ongoing process driven by the urgent need to strengthen the Association and its processes, realign its priorities, build support systems and update capacities in accordance with new realities; with a view to enhancing consultation, consensus-building, regional and international cooperation, developing the vision, mission and shared values of the ACS, in accordance with the Articles of Agreement, reinforcing the institutional structures, image and visibility of the Association; express our commitment to the effective implementation of the Plan of Action 2022-2028;

### **Article II The post COVID-19 pandemic recovery**

2. **Express** our deep concern with regard to the various variants of the COVID-19 virus that continue to cause infections and in some cases even death in all sectors of our societies, particularly amongst those most disadvantaged populations, we must therefore continue our efforts with regard to public health and universal, equitable, supportive, affordable and free access to vaccines; as well as supplies, medical equipment and other treatments against COVID-19;
3. **Recognise** the efforts made by Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Chile and Mexico to produce and package vaccines against COVID- 19 and seek World Health Organization (WHO) approval. In this regard, we acknowledge all the countries and organisations that have supported ACS Members and other States and territories of the world to face the pandemic with medical services and donations and specially recognise the Government and People of Cuba for offering medical services and support. In this regard, highlight the importance of continuing the promotion of strengthened national and regional capacities for the development of vaccines, health technology and medicines that allow us to combat health emergencies and coordinate efforts in multilateral spheres to ensure that all our peoples have fair and equitable access to medication and health supplies;
4. **Will continue** to promote post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery that prioritizes an equitable, sustainable and resilient reactivation of all economic sectors to guarantee access to financing under favourable conditions, including concessional resources, by International Financial Institutions (IFIs), so that countries with solvency difficulties can face the economic, social and health crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic;
5. **Recognise** the initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for holding the Summit on Food Systems held on 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 2021 which emphasised the urgent and fundamental need to strengthen agri-food systems in the region, with the aim of ensuring strengthened food and nutrition security for the peoples of the Greater Caribbean region, during this Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and commend the results. **Support** the Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and the Eradication of Hunger of Latin American and Caribbean States 2025, which seeks to strengthen all dimensions of food security in our region for the benefit of our people. Taking into account the important lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage Member States to explore modalities of cooperation and collaboration for the achievement of these goals, such as the Pact for a Great Alliance for Nutrition and Zero Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, -

put forward by Colombia with the support of the World Food Programme - and some ten States (Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru) and with the perspective that more countries of the Caribbean Region can join this initiative.

## **Article III Recovery, Reconstruction, Increased Resilience and Sustainability of Industry and Tourism in the Region**

- 6. Recognise** sustainable tourism as an essential activity for economic and environmental development in the Greater Caribbean. In this regard, we shall promote a multi-destination approach, highlighting the sustainability and essence of tourism segments, in recognition of the contributions of the tourism industry to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the Greater Caribbean, and thereby generate more competitive destinations that better meet the standards demanded by the global tourism market;
- 7. Will redouble** our efforts to promote the sustainable development of fisheries, agriculture and forestry resources in the Greater Caribbean and enhance the linkages between tourism and other productive sectors, as this contributes to the strengthening of economies through activities such as eco-tourism, community-based rural tourism, agro-tourism, recreational fishing, recreational diving, hiking and adventure tourism, to build resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change and other disruptions to sustainable development;
- 8. Recognise** the importance of promoting a Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Agenda for the Greater Caribbean, on the basis of the strategic action of Sustainable Tourism contained in the ACS Plan of Action 2022- 2028;
- 9. Also recognise** the importance of ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC), the exchange of best practices, the development of the supply and demand of tourism products and services and boosting the economies of countries, promoting sustainable, responsible, accessible and quality multi-destination tourism products with high added value; benefitting also from the comparative and complementary advantages of the region, which include the proximity between States and territories; the cultural richness and diversity, including the ancestral knowledge of indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities; the hospitality of the peoples of the Greater Caribbean; the biodiversity; scenic beauty; human talent; gastronomy and abundant natural resources of the Region.

- 10. Emphasise** the urgency of declaring the sargassum crisis as an emergency associated with the climate crises and the impact of human activities that affects the entire Greater Caribbean region representing a threat for economic, social and cultural development in particular tourism activities, fishing, and our people's culture and health but also the sustainability of marine biodiversity and the stability of marine and coastal ecosystems.

## **Article IV The Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the development of the Blue Agenda**

- 11. Recognise** that the loss of biodiversity and fragility of the region, together with the global climate crisis we are facing, and the increase in pollution, demand the strengthening of global and regional multilateralism to formulate and implement regional initiatives that allow for the analysis of the concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, and begin work on the development of a Blue Agenda to promote actions for the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources, which entails the increase in the mobilisation of resources, capacity building and related technology transfer;
- 12. Welcome** the successful conclusion at the beginning of March 2023, in New York, of the negotiations of the internationally legally binding instrument on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions and look forward to its prompt adoption and enter into force;
- 13. Recognise** plastic pollution as one of the main global environmental issues and welcome the progress of the negotiations to agree on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including the marine environment. **Reiterate** the key importance for this agreement to include adequate means of implementation in order to ensure the capacity building and technical assistance needed, as well as the mobilization of new, additional and predictable financial resources which developing countries, including ACS Members require in this context;
- 14. Are committed** to promoting proposals towards the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development, through the development of a Blue Agenda aimed at 1)

strengthening compliance with the international framework that regulates the ocean; 2) reducing pressure on oceans and seas by creating enabling conditions for the compliance with SDG 14 and the development of a sustainable blue economy 3) cope with emerging threats such as sargassum crisis and 4) strengthening applied research and international data on oceans to improve decision making; taking into account relevant international instruments pertaining to ocean governance such as, in particular, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its States Party and its derivative instruments ;

**15. Congratulate** Costa Rica and France on their designation as co-hosts of the Third United Nations Ocean Conference, to be held in Nice, France, in June 2025, and the celebration of the High-Level Event on Ocean Action, to be held in Costa Rica in June 2024, which, amongst other objectives, will contribute to supporting the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water;

**16. Are also committed** to supporting the United Nations Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and its vision of achieving “the science we need for the ocean we want”, in particular through the development and application of marine environmental management tools that promote the conservation and sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea and its resources, as well as the protection, preservation and restoration of its ecosystems.

## **Article V Climate Change and the Environment**

**17. Reiterate** that climate change continues to be the greatest threat in the countries of the Greater Caribbean, leading to various effects such as persistent drought and extreme weather events, soil degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, rise in average sea levels, coastal erosion, the sargassum crisis and ocean acidification, which urgently require a global response commensurate with the magnitude of these challenges;

**18. Welcome** the progress and results made by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties-COP27, including the decisions agreed upon in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt, on November 20, 2022, in particular the decision by consensus for the creation of the Fund on "Loss and Damage", which represents a historic milestone for the most vulnerable countries and regions of the Planet, and reiterate a call to the international community, in particular developed countries, to contribute to

the Fund with merit based financing for its operation. Likewise, we join the call to developed countries to comply with the pending \$100 Billion Goal established in the Paris Agreement, and we underline the imminent need to take measures so that the temperature of the Planet does not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius;

**19. Agree** to continue the search for urgent concerted action in the face of global climate change in order to place the Greater Caribbean at the forefront of international efforts to limit global warming to 1.5° C in accordance with the Rio Conventions and the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the ACS Managua Declaration;

**20. Welcome** the political will and commitment demonstrated by some developed States that have doubled their contribution to the Green Climate Fund; and **again urge** developed States to continue taking the lead with regard to more ambitious mitigation and adaptation commitments; the provision of resources and transfer of technology, infrastructure and training to developing States, to counteract the effects of climate change and manage the loss and damage caused by them;

**21. Also welcome** the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), aimed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, as well as to promote the conservation and restauration of resources and ecosystem functions for the benefit of the people and the planet;

**22. Recognise** the formulation and implementation of public environmental policies and resource management through the implementation of sustainable and inclusive projects intended for the adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage caused by climate change and enhanced resilience of States, including through the development of regional projects, including energy transition issues and increased participation in renewable energies, which allow access to global financing mechanism as well as through South-South and Triangular cooperation;

**23. Reiterate** the need to promote dialogue and generate coordination and cooperation mechanisms among States to comprehensively address migration caused by the effects of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, through

continuous collaboration and the exchange of good practices via South-South and Triangular cooperation, including efforts to reduce the vulnerability of populations and the resilience of affected communities;

- 24. Emphasise** the imperative of developing a more just, inclusive and supportive international financial system, and in that context welcome the “Bridgetown Initiative”, proposed by the Government of Barbados as a plan with the potential to significantly redesign the global financial system in order to improve the response to climate crises and to particular development challenges, thus allowing developing countries, in particular, to have the fiscal space in order to work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **Article VI Promotion of an Economic Space of the Greater Caribbean, for the Development of Commercial Economic Relations and Investment**

- 25. Promote** the creation and consolidation of tools and effective mechanisms that stimulate the facilitation and expansion of trade, as well as promote literacy, digital transformation and connectivity, particularly in those countries of the Greater Caribbean that have difficulties accessing these resources;
- 26. Recognise** the need to promote sustainable economic development by equipping the Greater Caribbean with effective tools, including new technologies that facilitate greater participation of our enterprises in global business trends and their more effective integration into regional and international value chains;
- 27. Undertake** the development of a Digital Agenda for the Greater Caribbean, in order to promote the ownership and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and expand e-commerce, including MSMEs in the Region; to promote the digital transformation of the Greater Caribbean, to reduce the digital divide with an inclusive approach and to bolster the economic recovery and resilience of the Region;
- 28. Recognise** the importance of local capacity building to promote and facilitate trade, attract investment including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and the need for exchanges between national Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs), in an effort to share experiences and best practices that can contribute to the improvement of the business climate that generate quality

jobs and contribute to sustainable development from an environmental, economic and social perspective;

- 29. Highlight** the importance of improving connectivity and mobility among the countries and peoples of the Greater Caribbean, and in this regard, request the continued promotion of land, air and maritime transport links throughout the region, in order to maintain and vitalise an environment conducive to investment, trade, tourism and the mobility of goods and people in the Greater Caribbean;
- 30. Also Highlight** the importance of entrepreneurs, micro, small, medium and large businesses in the region, and request that support programmes continue to be implemented so that businesses can globalise and reach more markets with their services and products; moving forward with the transformation of the various dimensions that contribute to fostering the empowerment of women and social inclusion, supporting ethnic and other vulnerable groups;
- 31. Reaffirm** our support for and commitment to strengthening an open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, fair, and multilateral trading system based on rules and agreements within the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with the aim of reducing current imbalances and contributing to sustainable and more inclusive development; including special and differential treatment for developing states as well as particular attention to the challenges that affect Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) ;
- 32. Reaffirm** the commitment of the region to promote greater exchange within the region through mechanisms of joint promotion of business sectors interested in the search for more and better opportunities to generate new businesses, and to strengthen the supply chain through the identification of intermediate and final goods that can be complementary in the economies of scale of the region, including through the convening of the Business Forum of the Greater Caribbean.

## Article VII Commitment to the purposes and the principles of the UN Charter and the Greater Caribbean as a Zone of Peace and Cooperation

- 33. Reiterate** our commitment to and respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of International Law with the maintenance of international peace and security; the promotion of friendly relations and solidarity among nations; the promotion of international cooperation; the sovereign equality of States; the fulfilment, in good faith, of obligations undertaken; the peaceful settlement of disputes; the prohibition of the use or threat of use of force, and the territorial integrity and political independence of any State, and non-interference in internal affairs, indispensable requirements to preserve the Greater Caribbean as a Zone of Peace and cooperation, in accordance with the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace by virtue of which each State has the power to consolidate and strengthen its own unique political, economic, social and cultural system;
- 34. Reject** the application of unilateral coercive measures, contrary to International Law, including the lists and certifications that negatively affect the livelihoods of the population, the national efforts in pursuit of the economic and social development of the Member States of the ACS, the implementation of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, the peace and prosperity of the Greater Caribbean and post-pandemic recovery; in this regard we request the exclusion of Cuba from the unilateral list of countries that allegedly sponsor international terrorism;
- 35. Reiterate** the call to the government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade that it imposes on Cuba, which has been intensified in the context of the pandemic, including its extraterritorial application, and, contrary to International Law, causes great harm to the wellbeing of the Cuban people;
- 36. Recognise** the importance for the Caribbean States to continue to participate actively to advance common positions that contribute to negotiations in regional and multilateral fora addressing issues of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control and their ammunition, in light of the challenges posed by armed violence, organised crime, terrorism and illegal drug trafficking;

- 37. Consistent with** our legitimate actions and aspirations to move towards a more peaceful, secure, and prosperous world recognising the risks and challenges that lethal autonomous weapons represent, emphasize the decision of ACS Member States to endorse the "Communiqué of the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on the Social and Humanitarian Impact of lethal Autonomous Weapons", agreed on 24 February 2023, in La Ribera de Belen, Costa Rica.

## Article VIII Vulnerability of Greater Caribbean States

- 38. Recognise** the multifaceted and layered threats and challenges facing the Greater Caribbean to achieve sustainable development and the imperative to build coordination and cooperation capacities within the ACS, to address the Region's vulnerabilities that are exacerbated by current global challenges, mainly threats affecting public health, food and nutritional security; adverse effects of climate change; trade barriers; financial, economic and security crises. In this regard, we support the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index.

## Article IX Information and Communication Technologies to Foster Peace and Development

- 39. Emphasise** the importance of Information And Communication Technologies (ICTs), including the internet as a tool to promote peace, human well-being, development, knowledge, social inclusion and economic growth; promoting the creation of a global culture of cyber security and protection of critical information infrastructure, as well as raising awareness about threats to the cyber security of States by cybercriminals; we underscore the need to ensure that the use of ICTs does not infringe upon the right to privacy of individuals.

## Article X Partnerships

- 40. Call for** a dialogue and the most comprehensive and inclusive partnership possible between ACS stakeholders at the local, national, regional and multilateral levels to develop creative, constructive and results-based mechanisms to build resilience, to effectively address obstacles to development with a view to achieving social, economic, environmental, sustainable and inclusive development;

41. **Renew** the commitment to strengthen working relationships with other regional and international organisations, including the ACS Founding and Observer Organisations; the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS,) the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the United Nations and its specialised agencies, in the pursuit of the resilience and sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean;
42. **Commit to developing and promoting** mechanisms for foreign policy consultation, that advance the objectives and goals of the ACS in regional and international fora, in which the countries of the Greater Caribbean share membership.

## Article XI Funding and Cooperation for Development

43. **Reiterate** the call to the international community on the need for analysis of the graduation of Middle Income Countries, taking into account the multisectoral vulnerabilities and structural challenges of our countries, as well as multidimensional measures that go beyond per capita income, in order to consolidate a fairer and more effective distribution of the resources of international cooperation for development, noting that South-South and Triangular cooperation are not a substitute for North-South cooperation, but a complement to same; being agile and flexible instruments for the mobilisation of experiences, knowledge and good practices, limited by our countries, to provide practical solutions to daily problems of sustainable development, from a multilevel perspective, that benefit national and local government institutions as well as the diversity of ethnic communities and vulnerable populations;
44. **Underscore** the importance of fulfilling the commitments regarding Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other types of financing for sustainable development, emphasizing the objective established by the United Nations that developed countries allocate 0.7% of its Gross National Product to this effort;
45. **Support** the creation of the ACS Catalogue of International Cooperation Offers, which compiles the best practices of the Member States in economic, development and environmental matters, which will help to make South-South and Triangular Cooperation more effective, based on the

spirit of solidarity, transparency, horizontality and mutual benefit, positioning us as a more solid, resilient and consistent block;

46. **Recognise** that South-South Cooperation, based on solidarity and sovereign equality of states, guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual benefit complements and does not replace other systems of Cooperation;
47. **Acknowledge** the actions of ACS Associate Members, Observer States and other partners through the channelling of different modalities of international cooperation to the region and urge that this be further strengthened by taking a leading role in the mobilisation of resources;
48. **Also acknowledge** with appreciation, the role of North/South, South/South, triangular and decentralised cooperation offered by ACS Member States and Associate Members, Observer States and other partners in support of the ACS Plan of Action, 2019-2021, while expecting at the same time even more dynamic collaboration, cooperation and resource mobilisation in support of the Plan of Action 2022-2028;
49. **Recognise** the contribution of ACS Associate Members to the achievement of the cooperation objectives of the Greater Caribbean Region, and welcome a strengthening of their role and involvement in the concrete implementation of projects developed within the framework of the ACS Plan of Action;
50. **Welcome** the hosting of the Summit of Heads of State of the G77 Group on development challenges and the role of science, technology and innovation in Havana Cuba on 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in which will have as its principal objective the promotion of cooperation projects to the benefit of developing countries, including ACS Members;
51. **Urge** international agencies to strengthen development funding cooperation, by exploring and diversifying towards new and innovative sources of funding that complement traditional sources of international cooperation, in order to scale up funding mechanisms, in accordance with resolution 69/313, of July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Funding for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

- 52. Considering** that cooperation for sustainable development is a global concept that encompasses different models of assistance in support of populations. The States recognise that the ACS Secretariat can undertake the necessary engagements with viable bilateral or multilateral partners, without prejudice to the latter's status within the ACS further to prior consultation with and approval by Member States, in order to mobilise financial and technical resources in support of the development of the Greater Caribbean;
- 53. Instruct** the Secretary General of the Association to continue working on an ACS operational manual for international cooperation, which will reflect and shape corresponding processes so that the various Directorates of the Association can develop cooperation projects and thereby manage more effectively the international cooperation offered to the region, generating a sounder atmosphere of credibility and confidence in the administrative processes.

## Article XII Plan of Action 2022-2028

- 54. Reaffirm** our support for the Plan of Action 2022- 2028 and its strategic objectives and cross-cutting issues aimed at strengthening the Association and the development of its Member States, therefore we charge the Ministerial Council, in accordance with article VIII of the Convention Establishing the ACS, to supervise and evaluate its implementation at its next Ordinary Meeting;
- 55. Acknowledge** the valuable space for engagement provided by the ACS International Cooperation Conference, the Sixth Edition of which took place in Havana, Cuba on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, entitled "*The Greater Caribbean, building bridges of transformation and innovation towards a future of sustainable progress*";
- 56. Appreciate** the First ACS Strategic Plan 2022-2028, that provides the Association with a clear vision and mission as an instrument to consolidate the work of the organisation.

## Article XIII Appreciation and Welcome

- 57. Express** our deepest gratitude to the President of Guatemala, His Excellency Alejandro Giammattei Falla and to the Government and People of Guatemala for their warmth and hospitality and for the excellent arrangements made for the convening of this IX Summit of the Association of Caribbean States in Antigua, Guatemala;
- 58. Are also grateful** for the permanent support of the ACS Secretariat under the leadership of His Excellency Rodolfo Sabonge, Secretary General, whose vision, leadership and dynamic work is already contributing to the economic and social recovery processes of the Greater Caribbean and the improvement of the quality of life of its inhabitants;
- 59. Welcome** the Chairman of the Association of Caribbean States for the period 2023-2024, the **Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation in The Republic of Suriname, Albert Ramchand Ramdin** and extend to him our best wishes for success during his tenure at the helm of the Association;
- 60. Congratulate** the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a geographical sub-regional grouping and Founding observer of the ACS, on the occasion of a most significant milestone: the fiftieth anniversary of its establishment since the signing of the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas; **join** the regional and international community in celebrating the vision of CARICOM's founding fathers- the Prime Ministers of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the Hon. Errol Barrow, Forbes Burnham, Michael Manley and Eric Williams respectively- for a more integrated and united region; **acknowledge** the founding and anchoring role of CARICOM leaders in bringing together the Greater Caribbean by pursuing the establishment of the Association of Caribbean States; and **raise a toast** to the achievements, past, present and to come of this Community which continues to produce world class leaders and citizens who make our Region proud and our world a better place.