



**REMARKS BY
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SECRETARY-GENERAL
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**

AT THE

**THIRTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS**

**GEORGETOWN, GUYANA
9 - 10 JANUARY 2017**

- ❖ Honourable Carl Greenidge, Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana and Chairman of the Community Council of Ministers of CARICOM;
- ❖ Other Honourable Ministers and Other Heads of Delegation;
- ❖ Heads of Regional Institutions;
- ❖ Deputy Secretary-General, Members of EMC and Staff of the Secretariat;
- ❖ Ms. Tonni Ann Brodber, Representative of UN-Women;
- ❖ Distinguished Delegates;
- ❖ Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Thirty-Ninth Meeting of the Community Council of Ministers. Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy New Year as we resolve to make 2017 a memorable one for our Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

As we begin our work for 2017, it is fitting that the Council with “primary responsibility for the development of Community strategic planning and co-ordination” is first off the mark. Your discussions and the outcome could go some way towards setting the tone for the Community for the rest of the year. The items on the agenda before you provide ample opportunity for this Council to do so, as it discharges the responsibility assigned to it under the Revised Treaty.

In that regard, consideration of the key issues to engage the attention of our Heads of Government at their Inter-Sessional Meeting here in Guyana next month, is a key component of your deliberations. Your recommendations would indicate the areas which you believe the Community should be focusing on in 2017.

Undoubtedly, one of those areas would be the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Last July, our Heads of Government had mandated that a review of the status of the CSME be completed for their consideration at the upcoming Inter-Sessional Meeting. That review is being undertaken as well as a look at how we can re-calibrate the CSME to make it more responsive to address issues of growth and competitiveness.

This is a crucial year for the Reform Process within our Community, as we arrive at the mid-point of the Five-Year Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2019, a foundational element of that Process. The Operational Plan for achieving its goals has been designed, identifying the specific roles for each of the Implementation Partners, the Member States, the Regional Institutions and the Secretariat. To measure our progress, a requirement of the Strategic Plan is the establishment of a planning, monitoring and evaluation and reporting system, based on the principles of Results-Based Management (RBM).

With \$500,000 US financing from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), a consulting firm has been engaged in developing and implementing a Gender Sensitive CARICOM Results-Based Management System. This is a timely and necessary initiative which will bring about significant changes in the way the Community works. It will assist in fostering a results-oriented culture throughout the Community and will help us to measure the pace of the regional integration process and its impact on the lives of the people of our Region.

A number of principles will guide the system, including capacity-building which will encompass stakeholders across all levels of the Community, particularly the representatives of the Implementing Partners.

A little later this morning, I will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Among the areas covered by the MOU is a deepening of the capacities of CARICOM Member States to implement international, regional and national commitments to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Delegates, you have before you the Work Programme and Budget of the Secretariat which was reviewed by the First Joint Meeting of the Budget Committee and the CARICOM Committee of Ambassadors last December. The Committee commended the Secretariat for the work done in 2016 and, for the most part, accepted the Work Programme for 2017. However, the Committee could not agree on the budget proposed by the Secretariat, with some Member States recommending that it be kept at the same level as 2016.

The Work Programme and Budget has been drawn up, fully cognisant of the need to prioritise, and of the financial challenges facing our Member States, as well as the depletion in the resources supplied by our Development Partners. It also took account of the need to fulfil the many mandates given to the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman, 2017 has the potential to be an unsettling year internationally, with many of our Partners looking to adjust to new circumstances. For us in the Community, we are still grappling with the issues of low growth, correspondent banking, climate change, crime and security and restrictions on access to concessional development financing.

The situation demands that we must take our best option to ensure that we stand fast against whatever challenges may arise. That best option for us as Small States is to strengthen and deepen our integration. It is our path to sustainable development and the continued improvement of the lives of the people of our Community.

I thank you.