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CARICOM and Chile demonstrate south-south cooperation at work



From l-r: Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary, Ms. Kaye Bass; Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Timothy Harris; CARICOM Ambassador His Excellency Sydney Osborne, and the Press Secretary, Ms. Valencia Grant

By: **Valencia Grant, Press Secretary**, Press Release

BASSETTERRE, St. Kitts, July 5th, 2016 (PRESS SEC) – Caribbean leaders today officially exchanged views with the President of the Republic of Chile, Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet, at the 37th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Georgetown, Guyana.

Prime Minister of Dominica the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, who is the Chairman of the 37th Regular Meeting, addressed the Chilean President upon her arrival into the Guyana Pegasus Hotel Conference Room.

"We have taken a very keen interest in your leadership," Chairman Skerrit told Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet, who served as President from 2006 to 2010 before becoming her country's leader again in March 2014, as well as the first person since General Carlos Ibañez in 1952 to return to Chile's presidential palace, La Moneda, for a second term.

"You have taken a very keen interest in matters pertaining to women, children, and the disadvantaged in particular," Chairman Skerrit said before mentioning the Chilean President's keen interest in sports. "We, too, in CARICOM share those sentiments and concerns, and we look forward to working with you as you advance those very important ideals," Chairman Skerrit added.

The Chairman of the 37th Regular Meeting drew a further parallel between the CARICOM countries and the Republic of Chile, by stating that their respective governments have placed issues related to climate change high on their agenda.

On September 26th, 2014, six months after President Bachelet took office for the second time, the Chilean Congress enacted new environmental tax legislation, making Chile the first country in South America to approve a carbon tax. Chile's carbon tax is due to take effect in 2018, when carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from its power sector start being taxed. Next year, Chile's government will begin measuring CO2 emissions from thermal power plants.

According to the World Bank, CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita) in Chile measured 4.6 in 2011 compared to 1.8 in 1960 while Latin America & the Caribbean (all income levels) measured 2.9 in 2011 compared to 1.3 in 1960. North America measured 16.7 in 2011 compared to 15.5 in 1960.

CARICOM countries absorb more global carbon emissions than they emit into the air, and like many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) they are expected to bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change.

"Notwithstanding the fact that we [CARICOM] are the least contributor in regards to carbon gas emissions, we recognize our own global responsibilities so we have been working amongst ourselves and also with various groups around the world to advance the concerns of Small Island Developing States such as nations like ours," Chairman Skerrit said.

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President Bachelet reaffirmed her country's commitment to maintaining close ties with CARICOM, and acknowledged shared concerns. "Latin America and the Caribbean are a core priority of our foreign policy," she said, adding that, "In this regard, our relations with CARICOM play an important role. We are sure that progressive integration and cooperation can make a difference when we seek to achieve a prosperous and inclusive picture for our people...CARICOM and Chile share views on international issues. We also agree on the need to comply with our obligations under the Paris Agreement [signed at the United Nations in New York on April 22nd, Earth Day 2016]."

The Chilean President continued: "We have to reduce inequality and create opportunity for all our citizens. We all know that development is multidimensional. Economic growth is not an end in itself, but it must be a necessary means to achieving a more applicable, inclusive and sustainable development." She advocated for public policy that takes into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, and said, "The increase of intra-regional trade is an imperative of our time and a most appropriate and applicable answer to the decline in commodity prices."

On May 13th, 1996 in Kingston, Jamaica, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Government of the Republic of Chile entered into an Agreement establishing a Standing Joint Commission on Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination. That day, the parties also entered into an Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation that identified 18 areas of cooperation that include Tourism, Industry, Energy, and the Environment.

Cooperation between CARICOM and Chile deepened when two Joint Commission meetings were held in 2003 and 2012. Held in Santiago, Chile, from February 3rd to 4th, 2012, the second Joint Commission meeting was co-chaired by Chile's then-Foreign Affairs Minister Alfredo Moreno Charme and by the Chair of the CARICOM Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) at the time, Dr. the Honourable Timothy Harris, the Minister of International Trade, Industry and Commerce et al. of St. Kitts and Nevis, who is now the Prime Minister.

"This is a concrete example of South-South cooperation," Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Honourable Andrew Holness said of CARICOM's longstanding, mutually beneficial relationship with Chile at the meeting today.

Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley addressed the Chilean President, saying, "Your presence here today affords us the opportunity to hold out great hope that the high esteem at which Chile is held in the international community, and your personal high esteem among leaders and diplomats in the region and the world, can work to the benefit of CARICOM and its people, as well as to the advancement of the interests of our CARICOM region and Chile."

Today, Tuesday, July 5th, the Republic of Chile officially opened its Embassy in Guyana. It has been operational since last August when President David Granger accredited Chile's first-ever resident Ambassador to Guyana, Mr. Claudio Rachel Rojas.

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