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Seventh Session  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
19-25 January 1983



ADDRESS BY  
HON. BASIL INCE  
MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY OF  
THE CDCC SEVENTH SESSION  
- MONDAY 24 JANUARY 1983 -

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Distinguished delegates, Mr. Executive Secretary, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I welcome you today to this Seventh Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) in Port-of-Spain. As you know, the CDCC originated here in Trinidad and Tobago on an initiative of the late Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams, when he was Chairman of the Sixteenth Session of the Economic Commission for Latin America held in Chaguaramas in May 1975. The CDCC was seen then as an instrumentality for reflecting the unique identity of the Caribbean States, an instrumentality which could serve to articulate the interests and needs of the Caribbean and co-ordinate their relations and activities in the framework of the United Nations System.

It is no secret that the high vision embodied in the creation of the CDCC some eight years ago has not been as fully reflected in our experience of its functioning. This important new instrument has met with many impediments to its full effectiveness, both at the level of its Secretariat in the Port-of-Spain Office and in ECLA as a whole within the United Nations in terms of resources, staffing and procedures, and, let me add, at the level of the Governments of the Caribbean which have not always followed through consistently the commitment embodied in the founding of the CDCC.

This has resulted in considerable frustration on the part both of the Secretariat and of Governments when they come to review the extent of implementation of their decisions and mandates in the work programme. I understand that this issue has been given intensive scrutiny in the past few days during the preparatory meeting of officials for this Session, and I hope that when we come in our turn to consider these recommendations, that we will be able to launch a new era in constructive and fruitful interaction between the Governments of the CDCC and our servicing Secretariat which will enable us, at our next session in a year's time, to record our satisfaction at an optimally functioning CDCC.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Caribbean today, like the wider world in which we exist, is passing through a period characterised by severe economic and social problems. None of our countries can solve these problems by its own unaided actions: we must co-operate or we will perish.

We share, in different degrees, the same problems of faltering agricultural production and distribution, of insufficient industrial production, of inadequate export earnings combined with unduly high levels of imports, an increasingly high cost of living, with threatened reductions in our standards of living, plus high unemployment and social change at an unsettling pace. Nowhere are the problems of government proving easy of solution, but the needs and aspirations of the people must be met.

The special needs and requirements of the Caribbean are as valid today as they were when the CDCC was formed. As we see it the CDCC continues to provide the forum and mechanism to channel the resources from the UN bodies and indeed from bilateral sources in order to bring benefit to the diverse needs of the Caribbean region in an orderly subregional framework.

We note that there are several other sources both multilateral and bilateral which have the same objective in view. There is therefore a great need to ensure that there is not a duplication and dissipation of efforts in this direction which could only lead to a less than optimum benefit for the region as a whole. Make no mistake, Ladies and Gentlemen, the absorptive capacity of the Caribbean region is far in excess of the meagre resources currently provided and I would like to make a strong appeal for a greater flow of resources to the region.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are assembled here today for the seventh time at a meeting of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee. The issues and problems confronting us and being debated at this seventh session remain remarkably similar to those of our previous sessions. I know that the Economic Commission for Latin America was at the forefront of stimulating intellectual thought directed to the economic and social development of Latin America. We would like to see the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee

focus attention on generating new ideas for social and economic development in the Caribbean, new approaches to solving old and persistent problems, analysing new developments that are taking place on the international scene, particularly with respect to the financial, monetary, industrial and trading arenas, and how they might be made relevant and applicable to the Caribbean environment. We would emphasize that attention should be directed to the practical and beneficial aspects and elements of these developments.

The CDCC has received mandates in our decisions at past sessions for co-operation with other subregional institutions such as CARICOM, Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). We have also given our Secretariat a mandate to assist in co-ordinating the activities in the Caribbean of other organizations of the UN System, all of which have given evidence of their willingness to co-operate with the CDCC and its Secretariat in the implementation of its Work Programme. In this connexion, let me say how pleased I am to see among our observers, representatives of so many of these organizations testifying to the continuing widespread interest in co-operative action in the Caribbean by subregional, regional and international organizations. I welcome all these representatives and look forward to your organizations' continued fruitful participation in the economic and social development of the Caribbean.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, the presence at this Session of the CDCC of the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles personally, and of so many heads of delegations at the ministerial level confirms the importance which our countries attach to the CDCC and the hope which it continues to embody for us of achieving a concerted approach and joint action in the solution of our problems. I pledge the unstinted efforts of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago in working with all other participants to ensure that we move successfully in that direction at this Session. The work which has already been done on our behalf by our representatives last week at the technical level of this Session will undoubtedly prove an invaluable basis for our own consideration. The unity and sense of common purpose demonstrated in that preparatory work will, I am sure, serve as an important element in achieving greater effectiveness in the future in reaching our goals.

Distinguished delegates, Mr. Executive Secretary, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me in concluding express my thanks to you for my election as Chairman, and my felicitations to the other members of the Bureau, the two Vice-Chairmen, Prime Minister Don Martina of the Netherlands Antilles and Minister Unison Whiteman of Grenada, as well as our Rapporteur, Minister Salahuddin of Guyana.

I thank you.