



Foreword

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These are challenging times for the Caribbean. For those of us who live in the region, the range of threats and problems facing many societies is extremely daunting. There is, today, an increasingly familiar roll-call of issues which appear on both the newspaper pages and in our research agendas, and these span across a wide panorama of issue areas: crime, guns, trade politics and preference erosion, environmental degradation and climate change, the crisis of gender and youth, stagnating economies, faltering regional integration, weak state institutions, poor governance and a lack of diplomatic/negotiating capacity, to name but a few.

Simply making sense of this wide variety of problems – let alone finding meaningful ways to address any or all of them – is an enormous challenge in itself.

The launch of the *Caribbean Journal of International Relations & Diplomacy*, a joint effort between the UWI Institute of International Relations and the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Foreign Affairs represents a necessary and long overdue attempt to contribute to this endeavour. The journal will be disseminated quarterly, and, with generous support from the Ministry, in both hard copy and through our open-access e-journal website. Its fundamental *raison d'être* is to make a unique contribution to both intellectual and practical debates in the region, providing timely analysis of topical regional and international affairs, as well as a distinctively Caribbean perspective on global issues. This is an undeniably

ambitious agenda: in time, we envisage that the journal will increasingly come to have a truly global reach.

We have assembled an editorial board of distinguished academics and practitioners, and our aim is to contribute to the deepening of linkages and the creation of synergies between both communities.

Our mandate, moreover, is genuinely interdisciplinary, in both intellectual scope and spirit of purpose. We aim to offer a wide variety of debate and discussion, both academic and more practical, and therefore will seek to provide a number of different types of article: original peer-reviewed academic research papers; think pieces, policy briefs, commentaries, public statements and research notes; invited essays, interviews and reflections; and the very best work by IIR scholars.

In this, our first issue, we have a similarly varied selection. In terms of more 'academic' pieces, Marlon Anatol discusses 'trade-readiness' and economic diversification in Trinidad and Tobago; Tanya Chung Tiam Fook looks at Guyana's experience of REDD+; and Ramesh Chaitoo argues that it is time for a re-envisioning of CARICOM-Canada relations. As for shorter pieces, we have Annita Montoute assessing Caribbean-China relations; Callixtus Joseph reporting on Caribbean participation in the recent Arms Trade Treaty; and Minister Dookeran offering his vision of a new kind of Caribbean integration. Rounding the issue off, former Jamaican Ambassador to the US, Richard Bernal, reflects on how the region has traditionally been viewed through the eyes of US Presidents and Secretaries of State.

We welcome you to celebrate with us this very important moment in the region's history. We also invite you to enjoy these articles, to engage with us and join the debate, and finally we thank you for supporting the first of many issues of the *Caribbean Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy*.

Port of Spain and St Augustine, February 2013