



**PUBLIC STATEMENT**

## **The Case for a New Caribbean Convergence Model**

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This initiative on the part of the Institute is one that we consider to be a very positive one and I want to thank Dr. Gonzales [Anthony P. Gonzales, former Director IIR] for taking the initiative to open up this dialogue in the country among the students and beyond, on issues affecting us in the global arena, and from what I have heard, the Institute acted promptly and I am very, very pleased to see the initiation of this process of dialogue among our population.

We are all aware that the issue before us in this seminar, and the Ambassador for Chile gave a very important insight into the historical antecedents to this. The result of 200 years of search, but more specifically the result of diplomacy within the last 5 years or so since the crisis that faced the world in economic terms in 2008 that may well turn out to be the turning point in the re-defining of diplomacy worldwide.

Since then, there has been a number of meetings and Summits and plans of action by Latin America and the Caribbean countries that culminated last December in the Summit that took place in Caracas. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-

Bissessar attended that Summit and indicated Trinidad and Tobago's firm commitment to working along with our Latin American brothers and sisters in the context of Caribbean regionalism to the furtherance of the work of CELAC. It was really the act of modern diplomacy in response to a modern set of circumstances that are creating changes in the world itself.

Today, we have found ourselves in a situation where many, especially in the academic world are arguing that the old order, the old supremacy of western-dominated global politics is on its way. In so doing, some have argued, that the fundamental concepts of that dominance which has to do with political legitimacy and economic nationalism will always prevail. But others in the academic world have said that the change is more fundamental, and that today we are in fact engaged in an environment in which ideological pluralism and economic transformation are going to be placed on the agenda of global re-arrangements that are taking place. And it is in this context that I see this initiative in relation to Latin America and the Caribbean, whatever the outcome of that very fertile debate will be the result of years to come and must be an area of interest for academicians and scholars in this field. I hope that this seminar will add some new light into these changing realities of global dynamics. The dual diplomacy that began, as I said, a few years ago and culminated in the case of Latin America in the Summit in Caracas asked a number of very fundamental questions. The next Summit to be held in January in Chile will perhaps have to confront the mandate of the Summit.

The new diplomacy of today's world in our context was fostered by many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean but I want to say a special word of appreciation to Chile for the leadership it has provided in this respect. Supported by our own sister Caribbean country, Jamaica and strongly reinforced by the Government of Venezuela and the Government of Cuba. The leadership that they provided as a group has brought us to this point. What do we do now at this Summit is the next issue? It is true that its being moulded in the context of an integration movement, and it is very true that there are many integration experiences of Latin America and the Caribbean. It therefore asks the question would this help in the integration of the region and to what end, and on what terms? And how will its impact be placed in the global context?

Recently, I have been arguing among my colleagues in the Caribbean region and when I speak about the Caribbean region I

am talking about the wider Caribbean region, the change is more fundamental, and that today we are in fact engaged in an environment in which ideological pluralism and economic transformation are going to be placed on the agenda of global re-arrangements that are taking place.

Perhaps the time was not correct then, but certainly, the time is correct now for us to redefine our integration process in the context of production integration. But this time it is not production integration for the region's economic space, but for building competitive industries globally. The resources in the region, coupled with the political will and the very fertile involvement of the private sector could create some new possibilities. I have referred to that loosely as the process of Caribbean convergence, as oppose to the structures of Caribbean integration. I've said that the structures of Caribbean integration are indeed in need of changes.

But, what we can immediately work on is the processes of integration which were referred to by Your Excellency as a convergence model. I hope that we can engage the public, the students, the scholars and the politicians for we are about to turn 40 years in the Caribbean integration movement and the time for us to react to the realities ahead of us is now. It is therefore in that context, that the first question we will ask at the Summit is - How really will this improve the convergence process among countries of Latin America and the Caribbean? And in so doing, what place will it have in the change in global dynamics that is taking place today?

The global dynamics today has reflected itself in many different articulations of groupings. The BRICS Association, the countries that are involved in BRICS are also finding the need to locate an alternative forum to deal with the global development.

We know what is happening in the G-20. We recognize the challenges of the integration process in Europe which is now facing some fundamental development issues. Sometimes people see it as financial and monetary issues, but I see it as fundamental development issues.

We recognize that President Obama's visit to the Far East, short as it was, is symbolically very important for the change in world order, as the United States begin to embrace in a new strategic partnership, countries of Asia which are well on the path towards economic convergence of some sort. It is in that context therefore, we cannot rely on the traditional methods of multilateralism to handle the world's diplomacy. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have

deliberately begun to search for a new method to reinforce multilateralism and we recognize that we must operate on what I refer to as a multi-track policy on diplomacy.

At this point in time, the choices are not clear. For what is clear we must be engaged in the deliberations as these choices pursue their own paths. So multi-track diplomacy is really what we have been engaged in, whether it is at the United Nations, in our bilateral relationships with countries, in our relationship with the emerging order globally, but at all times the fundamental objective is to ensure that we now move into our diplomacy of engagement.

I think the Caribbean is a group and Trinidad and Tobago in specific terms, has too often opted for the policy of abstention. Abstention viewed as a deliberate act is a good thing but, abstention viewed as an opted out act, is not a good thing. In today's world we have to change that and we cannot go into the comfort of opting out by abstention.

At times of course in our own policy of trying to pursue a position of neutrality, we may have to abstain as a deliberate act. Our role as a small economy in the global world environment is to have the power of convening other like-minded countries and at the same time having a moral influence on the issues before us, and that is the fundamental principle on which we hope to build our diplomacy for the future.

In the case of Latin America, we took the deliberate decision as a Government to join in the Latin American process that is now gaining momentum and clearly the meeting in January 2013 is an important one.

Not only because it would begin to mould the character of the integration processes in the region, the convergence models of which I speak about, but the diplomatic possibilities that can emerge as the Caribbean and Latin America work together.

Very specifically we have begun to open our doors to Latin American institutions. Trinidad and Tobago, apart from joining the Brazilian constituency some years ago in the IMF and the World Bank, have recently agreed to join the Andean Development Bank as a full member. For some time we were a member but not a full member. It is significant because we see now the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean being funded by sources and resources from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Andean Development Bank in my view is a major departure from our reliance on the traditional multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the IDB. In addition to that, we have agreed

that we will begin to be engaged at all levels whether at the meeting of Finance Ministers that would take place next week or this week really or any other levels to be engaged and to be involved in a new Latin American trust.

There is no doubt Trinidad and Tobago is as Latin American in its geo-political position as it is North American in the politics in which it has been engaged. In that context, our role is not to try and create anything different, but to ensure that the opportunity before us for this due diplomacy is one in which we are engaged in a positive way.

We have begun some interesting conversations with some smaller economies of the world, not only at the United Nations where we attended and participated in the Forum on Small States, but also in the World Bank where for some time we shared the Forum on Small States.

In our bilateral discussions I have seen a common platform emerging between countries that are relatively small, much larger than us in some cases, but equally exposed to the vulnerabilities of a changing global and political order in which the future remains unclear.

All we can do at this stage is to pursue what we consider to be constructive policy of neutrality, but at the same time, to ensure that with that policy of neutrality we are fully engaged so that at the appropriate time we can seek the support of the Caribbean, sister countries in the wider Caribbean including the Association of Caribbean States in order to be able to make some impact in the global diplomacy that is ahead of us.

Let me end by saying that this seminar is most opportune for the conduct of diplomacy. It could not have been held in a more appropriate forum, which is a forum that is anchored in the world of such. It is a forum that must eventually translate itself in the field of public policy and I hope therefore that this is but the beginning of a new dialogue. It has always been so, but at times different. The opportunities are now clearer; the choices are now for us.

It is in that context that we in Trinidad and Tobago, as a Government, support the initiative that is being taken in the Latin American process. More active participation at the inaugural Summit that took place in Caracas and we will be doing whatever part we consider to be right at the Summit that will take place in June.

Thank you very much.