

STATEMENT BY

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**ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**



DURING

**THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION
OF
THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
OF
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE
CARIBBEAN (ECLAC)**

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica.

Allow me to extend CARICOM's congratulations to you, Mr. Chair on your work and that of your Bureau in carrying out your duties to date. We also wish to commend the Government of El Salvador for hosting the Thirty-fourth Session of ECLAC in San Salvador last August.

I also have the honour to welcome Ms. Alicia Barcena and her team to New York, and to thank the Executive Secretary for her comprehensive reports on the economic and social situation in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2013 and on the strategic focus of ECLAC and its programme of work for 2014 to 2015. We also appreciate the report on the activities of the subsidiary bodies of ECLAC, 2012 – 2013.

We welcome the presence of Mrs. Diane Quarless, Director of the ECLAC sub-regional headquarters for the Caribbean and wish to acknowledge the support which her team in Port-of-Spain has continued to provide to CARICOM Member States as we participate in the various post-Rio+20 process and in the elaboration of a post-2015 development agenda. We appreciate their efforts in ensuring that the priorities of the Caribbean sub-region remain central to the broader ECLAC agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

For the last few years, our meetings have taken place against a backdrop of a global economy characterised by slow growth rates, a high degree of uncertainty and volatility; a situation which has, in turn, had negative effects on growth rates, income levels, unemployment and inflation throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. ECLAC estimates that the region will experience GDP growth of approximately four percent (4%) in 2013, which is indicative of movement in a positive direction for the region as a whole. However, that figure hides the reality that for many of the Caribbean island states in the region; such a growth rate far exceeds even the most positive economic projections for 2013. So, while Latin America and the Caribbean has generally fared better than other regions in the face of the global economic and financial crises and their lingering effects, as Madame Barcena has noted, a closer look reveals that most Caribbean states have fared less well than their Latin American counterparts.

Recent developments in the Caribbean have again drawn attention to our unsustainable debt burdens and limited options. The unsustainable levels of debt have left many Caribbean

economies with limited fiscal space and a declining capacity to direct funds to key areas of the economy including health, education and infrastructure development.

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. Chairman, the fact that the majority of Caribbean countries are categorised as Middle Income Countries has significantly limited our countries' options for addressing the burdensome debt situations in which we have found ourselves. For this reason we welcome the attention which ECLAC has continued to pay to the challenges faced by Middle-Income Countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and welcome the proposals which were presented by Madame Barcena when she introduced the publication "Middle-income countries: a structural-gap approach: Note by the Secretariat" during the Thirty-fourth Session of the ECLAC in San Salvador in 2012. The call to move beyond the reductionist approach of using income as the main means of classifying countries is welcome and one which CARICOM countries will continue to support. Indeed, a more widespread move towards an approach to classification which takes into account the heterogeneous social and economic factors which have an impact on a country's development prospects is necessary. So are efforts to address the structural gaps that serve to inhibit development and to which ECLAC has drawn the attention of the international community in recent years.

Mr. Chairman,

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of CARICOM, long vulnerable to exogenous shocks due to our open economies, have continued to be buffeted by declining earnings from tourism and remittances, combined with the steep decline in commodity prices and attendant increases in unemployment. Many of the challenges we face are integrally linked to the fact that we are SIDS and we therefore regard the decision which we all took at Rio+20 to convene the Third International Conference on SIDS in Samoa in 2014, as a key outcome of that Conference and an opportunity for SIDS from the Caribbean and elsewhere to determine how best to address their vulnerabilities and build resilience in the face of numerous challenges.

We look forward to working with countries throughout the region which have traditionally stood in solidarity with us in addressing the concerns of SIDS here at the United Nations, to secure a meaningful and effective outcome from the Samoa Conference. We also look forward to continuing to work with ECLAC, and particularly its subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, as we engage in the national and regional preparatory work which will lay the foundation for a successful conference. Their support during the Caribbean SIDS regional preparatory meeting, which will take place in Kingston, Jamaica from 2nd to 4th July 2013, and during the Interregional Meeting which will see SIDS from all regions gather in Barbados in late August, will be invaluable.

CARICOM Member States wish to reiterate the importance which they attach to the invaluable work of the ECLAC sub-regional headquarters in Port-of-Spain in a range of areas including the support it has provided to the region in enhancing the statistical capacity of Member States, its support for our efforts to implement the Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action (MSI), as well as its support for bolstering our efforts to increase our resilience through effective disaster risk reduction strategies. The work of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) is also noteworthy for its continued support for development cooperation to the Member States of CARICOM and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Given the valuable support which the sub-regional office has provided to date, it is imperative that due attention be paid to providing adequate financial and human resources to the office to enable it to carry out its activities in an effective manner. We anticipate that there will be significant improvements in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to our focus on the preparatory process for the SIDS Conference in 2014, Caribbean countries are engaged in the process of reviewing the progress they have made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a view to determining how best to contribute to the elaboration of a post-2015 development framework. The experience of the majority of CARICOM Member States in relation to the MDGs has been mixed and it will therefore be important that, in developing the post-2015 development agenda, we build upon the many structural and substantive lessons of the MDGs. It is also imperative that we accelerate action to accomplish what we can in the time that remains between now and the 2015 deadline.

Many CARICOM delegations participated in the ECLAC-supported meeting in Bogotá, Colombia in March 2013 which allowed for an initial exploratory discussion of many of the possible areas of focus for the post-2015 development agenda, including the development of sustainable development goals (SDGs). CARICOM Member States have yet to determine how the current slate of MDGs, possible new iterations of MDGs, and the SDGs, will fit together within the broader context of the post-2015 development agenda. However, we are clear that the agenda must lead to qualitative changes in the lives of people on the ground in our countries and embody a level of ambition that leads to development that is truly sustainable for the long-term.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenges we face throughout the region are many and the solutions difficult to come by. However, it is imperative that we continue to work together to think through both the challenges and possible solutions. In this regard, we appreciate the significant role that ECLAC,

with its extensive research capabilities and regional convening power, continues to play in our efforts.

I thank you.