



The Caribbean Can Always Count on Cuba's Eternal Friendship, Gratitude and Support

Publicado: Monday 11 December 2017 | 05:03:18 pm.

Publicado por: Juventud Rebelde

Speech delivered by President of the Councils of State and Ministers, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz at the Sixth CARICOM- Cuba Summit. Antigua and Barbuda, December 8th, 2017, Year 59th of the Revolution

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Author:

digital@juventudrebelde.cu

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(Verbatim – Council of State)

Honourable Gaston Alphonse Brown, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

Honorable Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Granada and Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Honourable Prime Ministers and Presidents of CARICOM member countries;

His Excellency Irwin Larocque, Secretary General of CARICOM;

His Excellency Mr Didacus Jules, Director General of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States;

Her Excellency Mrs June Soomer, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States;

Distinguished Heads of delegations, Ministers and Special Guests:

I wish to express sincere gratitude to the people and authorities of Antigua and Barbuda for the expressions of friendship we have received since we arrived in this country and to convey the appreciation and gratitude of the Cuban people and government for the expressions of solidarity of the Caribbean brothers after the physical disappearance of the Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, who was the initiator, guide and maximum promoter of political ties and cooperation between our countries.

I repeat his words on December 8, 2002: "The only way out for our peoples is integration and cooperation, not only among the States, but also among the various regional organizations and schemes."

I appreciate the resolve of the Honorable Gaston Browne and his government team, who despite the difficulties they are facing after the destructive passage of Hurricane Irma did not give up in their efforts to guarantee the conditions for the successful celebration of this, the Sixth CARICOM-Cuba Summit.

On this date, 45 years ago, the prime ministers of four countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, having recently achieved their independence, Errol Barrow, from Barbados; Forbes Burnham, from Guyana; Michael Manley, from Jamaica, and Eric Williams, from Trinidad and Tobago, decided to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba.

We will never forget that decision, which was a fundamental step for breaking the diplomatic and commercial siege against Cuba. It also allowed deepening the relations among the peoples of our America, united by centuries of history, culture and neighborhood.

With pride we also celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Caricom-Cuba Summits, whose agreements and results have led to a deeper and more effective relationship, based on solidarity and cooperation.

A sign of that everlasting friendship was the support we gave each other after the passage of the two intense hurricanes that hit our region last September. I want to thank the expressions of brotherhood and Caribbean solidarity we are receiving.

In this regard, the signing today of a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between the Civil Defense of Cuba and the Caribbean Agency for Disaster and Emergency Management is a significant step.

In the next triennium we foresee the continuity of joint projects, the result of the political will of our governments, such as the Regional School of Arts in Jamaica and the Center for the Stimulation of the Development of Children, Adolescents and Youth with Special Educational Needs, based in Guyana, which

have made progress in their implementation process.

We will continue to receive Caribbean students in our universities. The 5,432 young people from the Caribbean who have been trained and the 723 who are currently studying in them, as well as the 1,762 Cuban collaborators present in all the CARICOM countries, including 1,469 in the healthcare sector, are part of Cuba's contribution to the development of the Caribbean peoples.

We intend to advance in the development of trade and investments. Between 2014 and 2016 the commercial exchange grew by 70%. This year it is on schedule. The broad and diverse participation of Caribbean companies and agencies at the Havana Fair, last month, anticipates a higher growth.

We welcome the implementation, in January 2018, of the Second Protocol to the bilateral Trade and Cooperation Agreement, a document that is expanding the tariff preferences granted by Cuba and making access to our markets easier.

Esteemed Presidents and Prime Ministers and Guests:

How to face the challenge of moving towards development in the midst of the deep economic, social, political and environmental crisis that this hemisphere and the world are suffering? We must do it with unity, in our diversity, integration and genuine cooperation among us.

The dangers for the survival of the human species increase. The consequences of the application of concepts not universally accepted as "humanitarian intervention" and "responsibility to protect" are used to cover up interventionist and aggressive actions that threaten international peace and security and call us to defend international law and the full validity of purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

We should articulate to demand a fair action by the industrialized powers for the mitigation and adaptation of climate change effects, in particular with financial resources and technology transfer; to coordinate approaches on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, especially, to collectively face the mechanisms of domination imposed on us by the unjust international financial system.

I reiterate Cuba's invariable position in support, in all circumstances, of the right of small island states and developing nations to receive special and differential treatment in access to trade and investment.

We support the claim, equally fair, to receive cooperation according to their real situation and needs, and not on the basis of per capita income statistics that classify them as middle income countries and exclude them from the flows of financial resources indispensable for their development.

We join our voice against the persecution by transnational financial capital centers seeking to damage the international reputation of the Caribbean countries and hinder their economic development through inclusion in spurious and unilateral lists and singularization in dangerous supranational endeavors, supposedly for the confrontation to corruption.

We strongly support the fair demand of the Caribbean Community for compensation from the colonial powers for the horrors of slavery and trafficking.

We also have an urgent duty with our peoples to advance with increasingly solid steps towards the political, economic and social integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Today, the successful pace of CARICOM, the participation of all its member states and Cuba in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Association of Caribbean States, as well as the membership of some of us in the Bolivarian Alliance for Peoples. of Our America, have contributed to the advance regional integration, which we must continue to promote. On the other hand, participation in Petrocaribe has represented a guarantee and significant contribution to the development of our countries.

I would like to highlight the signing of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace by the Heads of State and Government of the region, on the occasion of the 2nd CELAC Summit, held in Havana in January 2014, which constitutes the basis for the development of relations of mutual respect between the States and the commitment of these with the strict fulfillment of their obligation not to intervene, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other State and to observe the principles of national sovereignty, equality of rights and self-determination of the peoples.

That's why we must not allow the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, one of our Latin American and Caribbean nations, to suffer continuous actions that pursue the destruction of its constitutional order. Cuba reiterates its permanent solidarity and support for the heroic Venezuelan people, its civic-military union and the Bolivarian and *Chavista* government led by President Nicolás Maduro Moros.

I underline the historical and ethical responsibility of our nations with the sister Republic of Haiti and the need to contribute to their development, with strict adherence to the will of their government and the legitimate needs of their people.

We Cubans deeply thank our Caribbean brothers for their unalterable position of respect and solidarity towards our country. We will never forget the permanent support for resolutions against the blockade against Cuba, as well as the numerous expressions of solidarity in the general debates of the General Assembly of the United Nations and in other international forums.

This support is even more relevant in the face of the setbacks caused by the actions of the new government of the United States against Cuba. The blockade is the greatest obstacle to the economic and social development of our country, and to Cuba's economic, commercial and financial relations with the world.

Caribbean brothers:

"In the faithful of America are the Antilles," José Martí wrote in 1894, the most universal of Cubans. Their ideas, widely shared today, give us the certainty that an increasingly prosperous, equitable, safe, sustainable and united Caribbean is possible; who can always count on Cuba's eternal friendship, gratitude and support.

Thank you very much (Aplauses).

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