



## **The World Today**

### **CARICOM—Need for a Single Development Vision**

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As CARICOM moves from the stage of Single Market to Single Economy, a single development vision becomes a matter of urgency. Creating the Single Economy will require the harmonisation of a broad range of economic policies and of the laws affecting business and labour. This will be a tall order. It needs to be guided by a vision of development for the Community to which all its stakeholders subscribe--governments, parliamentary oppositions, business, labour and other sectors of civil society.

That vision must be one in which the CSME enables the people of the Community to achieve, collectively, certain things that they cannot achieve separately; and enhances their sense of collective security, collective identity and collective self-confidence in their ability to deal with the world on equal terms. It must speak to the concerns and hopes of the ordinary people and provide opportunities for them to participate in its realization.

It should not be just about economics; but speak to the social content of development, about stewardship of the common environment, and about the reform of governance.

The CARICOM economy we seek to build should be capable of sustaining its own growth. It should be internationally competitive in its chosen areas of specialization. It must afford a decent standard of living for all its citizens and in particular provide adequate opportunities for advancement for young people, so that they do not need to live for the day when they can migrate. It should meet the test of social equity and provide an acceptable spatial distribution of the benefits of integration. And it must be ecologically sustainable.

It is too much to ask of the CSME that it should deliver all of this; but the CSME is only justified if helps to bring them about.

A great deal of the potential benefit in intra-CARICOM trade will come, not so much from in trade in goods as from trade in services. Governments need to move speedily in giving effect to the free movement of self-employed service providers; expediting the establishment of harmonized standards of accreditation and equivalency and a register of service providers that is accepted throughout the region. Qualified people need to be able to move from one country to another in the confidence that their right to provide services will be honoured. Already on the agenda is a proposal to extend free movement to teachers, nurses, artisans and domestic workers.

In harmonising economic policies, we should focus on where the greatest benefits will lie in the immediate future. The ‘Caribbean Connect Symposium’ held in Barbados last June assembled over 200 stakeholder representatives from the public and private sectors from all over the region to dialogue on priorities for the CARICOM Single Economy . Energy, financial services, agro-tourism, transport, harmonisation of the business environment, and monetary cooperation, were agreed to be the top priorities for common policies and functional cooperation, with significant potential benefits to the Community as a whole.

What about the social dimension? The CARICOM Charter for Civil Society was carefully negotiated over a period of several years, with a great deal of consultation with civil society stakeholders and was adopted by the Heads of Government in 1997. The Charter addresses human, civil, political, religious and cultural rights; the rights of indigenous peoples, women, children, workers, the family, and of people with disabilities. It guarantees rights to good governance, to participation in the economy; to health, education and basic necessities; it provides for environmental rights; and for the role of social partners.

Implementation of the Charter would provide tangible proof the value added of the Community, in ways that touch the lives ordinary people. It would show that CARICOM

is not only about business and trade. The Charter needs to be made legally binding; with the same force as the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and with access to the Caribbean Court of Justice for ordinary citizens who seek the assurance that its provisions will be honoured.

There are indications of an alarming rate of deterioration of some of our environmental assets; especially those on which our tourism industries depend. Caribbean coral reefs are estimated to have lost 80% of their living coral over the last 20 years, and beach erosion is estimated to affect 70% of Caribbean beaches. Many species of fish are under stress from over-exploitation and/or habitat degradation. There is concern about water availability in the medium-term, and about disposal of solid and toxic waste and atmospheric pollution.

The environmental dimension should be an integral part of the CSME vision. We need a common environmental regulatory regime for the Community as a whole; and a regular State of the CARICOM Environment report that tracks the progress of CARICOM states in fulfilling existing international and regional agreements and national laws related to the environment and serves as a tool of public education.

On governance, we can look to strengthening the Assembly of CARICOM Parliamentarians by giving it the power to deliberate on reports on the implementation of the Civil Society Charter and on the environment, and to scrutinize the budget of the CARICOM secretariat and of other Community institutions.

The single development vision guiding the CSME, therefore, should be one in which CARICOM becomes more than just an economic community; but also a social and environmental community with a much stronger political dimension; one that complements the strong cultural bonds that presently exist; one that enables its people to walk taller in the world community.