**5th SUMMIT**

**OF HEADS OF STATE AND/OR GOVERNMENT OF**

**THE STATES AND TERRITORIES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES**

PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE

MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES

Pétion Ville, 23 April 2013

**SPEECH BY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**HIS EXCELLENCY PIERRE-RICHARD CASIMIR**

Chairman of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States,

Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States

Honorable Delegates

Distinguished guests

Members of the foreign and local media

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Michel Joseph MARTELLY, Prime Minister Laurent LAMOTHE, and the Government and people of Haiti, I am very pleased to welcome you to Haiti in the framework of the Fifth Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). On this occasion I warmly welcome you to Port-au-Prince.

I wish you and your delegations a pleasant stay, and I hope that your work here will be successful. We will be available at all times to provide assistance and make you comfortable, so that by the time the Summit is over, you will feel the need to extend your visit in our warm, vibrant and hospitable country which in many respects, will remind you of your respective countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to reiterate the deep pleasure and pride we feel in the Republic of Haiti at being the venue of the Fifth Summit of this Association, following those held in Port of Spain in 1995, Santo Domingo in 1999, Margarita Island in 2001 and Panama in 2005. Eight years after our last high-level meeting, we have found it in our best interest to re-launch the Association by reforming its operational structures and strengthening regional co-operation in the integration process taking place at different levels. All in all, these are essentially the main objectives of the ACS.

Chairman of the Ministerial Council

Secretary General

Ladies and gentlemen

Every institution and every organization must, at some point in its existence, renew itself, expand its action, adapt its functions to the constantly changing and evolving reality. Undoubtedly, when the ACS was founded nineteen years ago, these parameters were taken into account. Thus, this Fifth Summit affords us an opportunity to adapt the founding vision of the Greater Caribbean in favour of consultation, dialogue and co-ordination among all our states and peoples.

Moreover, the main subjects of our discussions and exchange over these four days are justifiably significant. If I might recall, sustainable tourism, air and maritime transport in the region with the aim of uniting the Greater Caribbean by air and sea, the development of trade and investment, the reduction of risk and disasters which, to varying degrees, dramatically and repeatedly affect our countries. I am convinced that our discussions will produce resolutions and decisions which will be reflected in the Association’s final Declaration and strategic Plan of Action for the next 5 years.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Association of Caribbean States, with its twenty-five members, associate members, the countries and territories of the Greater Caribbean, is an economic and trade market of one quarter of a million persons. It is estimated that the region’s gross domestic product is five hundred billion dollars, and its trade is 180 billion. Thus, the region is gradually entering the globalized world market in a significant way. Our strategies are most relevant today – the convergence of trade policies among member states, the promotion of new initiatives to increase trade volumes, and the strengthening of public-private partnerships.

But above all, the issues and challenges of the Greater Caribbean are many. I can mention the major risks common to our region and beyond, such as weather-related hazards, natural disasters which wipe out the efforts of thousands of men and women to build the present and shape the future. Floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and tropical storms tragically strike our territories and our populations. Our Republic still bears the scars of these recurring phenomena, and all of our countries are threatened by these disasters. It is fortunate that our Association has set as one of its objectives the identification of mechanisms and measures to be collectively adopted in order to deal with these scourges which destroy infrastructure, lives and property.

Chairman of the Ministerial Council

Secretary General

Ladies and gentlemen

I will end my remarks this morning by reiterating my confidence and that of the Republic of Haiti in the future of the Association of Caribbean States. In spite of our diversity in language, culture, traditions, levels of development and natural resources we share a common destiny as well as a common face in the Caribbean. Priority sectors and structures which unite us such as trade, transport, tourism, the prevention of and fight against natural disasters help to strengthen our relations in the defense of our interests. I hope that this Fifth Summit will be a new starting point in the implementation of our policies and objectives for the greater benefit of all member states and the populations of our region.

Thank you