

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
DIRECTORATE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

**Intervention by His Excellency Álvaro Alemán H.
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Closing of the 26th Meeting of the Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations of the Association of Caribbean States.

Your Excellency, Francisco Álvarez De Soto, Vice Minister of International Trade Negotiations.
Ms. Ariadna Pérez, Director of Trade Development and External Economic Relations of the Association of Caribbean States.

Distinguished Delegates.

The Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations of the Association is called to play a pivotal role in the execution of programmes to develop and conduct trade among the member countries of the Association.

The Ministry of Trade and Industries of Panama, through the International Trade Negotiations Office, who is serving as Chair of the Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations for the period 2011 – 2012, has presented us with an ambitious work programme that seeks, among other things, to consolidate a logistical and multimodal platform to promote the development and expansion of trade and investment, competitiveness and connectivity among members; and to also deepen trade convergence among us brother countries that constitute the Greater Caribbean.

It is a programme that we believe is suited to the demands of what should be the pursuit or achievement of goals that would draw us ever closer to more dynamic and equitable trade, that would prove beneficial for all and which would pave the way for the consolidation of an economic region free from technicalities and obstacles to trade, toward the goal of achieving flexible and lucrative trade.

We are well aware that the task being pursued will not be an easy one, but good will and the desire to see this region grow in its trade and investment flow, taking into consideration and applying measures that would also favour our brothers whose economies are not as developed, can be a reality that is based largely on the good will and commitment of each of the countries belonging to this Association.

The implementation of the proposals produced on this occasion involves the commitment of all of us Member States of the Association of Caribbean States, for the work programme approved to have support not only from the Secretariat, but also from the different national authorities involved in foreign trade development, whether or not they are represented here today, since the results would yield benefits for all.

The time has come for us to walk firmly toward strengthening in a more dynamic fashion, the various components of action of this Special Committee, with more committed participation from the members of this Association.

Programmes to foster trade relations such as the Business Forum, the Forum of Trade Promotion Organisations, the Rum Dialogue and the Textile and Fashion Forum, should continue to be promoted as an effective tool for entrepreneurs, since they allow a more realistic exchange of knowledge regarding the markets of Greater Caribbean countries.

We appreciate the efforts that you have all undertaken during this Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations. We are certain that the work programme discussed and approved today will enjoy support from the Secretariat and from each of the Member Countries of the ACS, with a view to promoting a true agenda for trade and investment development, whose prelude will be economic integration that will encourage the development of the Greater Caribbean.

Thank you very much.