



**Republic of Panama
Ministry of Trade and
Industries**

International Trade Negotiations Office

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

**26th MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRADE
DEVELOPMENT AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS
Panama City, Panama, June 23, 2011**

Intervention by H.E. Francisco Álvarez De Soto, Vice Minister of
International Trade Negotiations of Panama

Your Excellencies and Heads of Delegation of the Members States of the
Association of Caribbean States

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps and International
Organisations accredited in Panama

Esteemed Heads of Delegation of the Countries and Observer
Organisations of the ACS,

First of all, I want to convey my thanks to all delegations present for heeding
the call made by the Government of Panama and for your valuable
interventions and contributions to the discussions held during this Meeting
yesterday.

The report that I have received on the deliberations advanced leads me to conclude that we are making significant strides in obtaining a balanced, substantial, reasonable and realisable Work Programme, which also covers important activities and areas, whose execution will undoubtedly support increased integration and deeper trade in the Greater Caribbean.

I wish to reiterate Panama's strong commitment, as Chairman of this Committee, to move forward with the execution of this 2011 -2013 Work Programme of the Special Committee on Trade Development and External Economic Relations of the ACS, on which we could finally reach consensus.

We have clearly acknowledged the need to encourage trade and investment relations among the countries of the Greater Caribbean and thus, our **Trade Integration Agenda** places great importance on strengthening these relations.

We are convinced that actions and initiatives for the gradual reduction of obstacles to trade and investment; the need to identify ways in which to promote the ACS Region in other regional initiatives; and the strengthening of trade capacities; all elements of the Work Programme proposed, will boost trade among Greater Caribbean countries and foster new opportunities to expand and intensify the trade in goods and services, as well as investment for this region.

I would like to also underscore our firm conviction that the establishment of unilateral tariff preferences in favour of those countries whose percentage of trade with the region requires as such, will serve as motivation to

promote the participation of those members in intraregional trade. Moreover, the convening of Forums will contribute to increased interaction by our business community to encourage business in our region.

Additionally, we want to make progress in deepening transparency via mechanisms that would afford trade operators access to relevant information, in an opportune and systematised manner, so as to facilitate flexible and secure trade in the Region.

We will maintain close communication with different co-operating international organisations so as to promote co-operation and the resources necessary to advance toward a further deepening of trade in the Greater Caribbean region.

I want to insist on the need for all of us to make a firm commitment to execute this Work Programme and I hope that there will be improved participation by members in all meetings and activities that we organise.

I therefore wish to take this opportunity to make an appeal to the ACS Secretariat and to the member countries in attendance and those not represented at this ordinary meeting, to heed the call of the Chairman of the Special Committee to participate at the governmental levels proposed so as to ensure that the agenda put forward could be discussed, approved and executed.

From now, the Chair announces that a request will be made once again for our Vice Ministers responsible for Trade Integration or their counterparts to attend the next meeting of this Committee. Panama is of the view that if the

governments of the Member Countries of the Association really want to facilitate and materialise initiatives that would make a contribution, together with their respective national policies, to the economic development of our peoples, it is indeed necessary for the authorities responsible for trade integration policies to begin to meet, at the political level, in order to push a real and tangible trade agenda for the Greater Caribbean.

Panama will therefore consider the possibility of suggesting a meeting of the Ministers responsible for International Trade in the countries of the Association, with a view to sending everyone a clear message, through their presence and leadership, regarding the economic potential of this tremendous market of the Greater Caribbean.

Finally, I reiterate to you my gratitude for the advancements made and I express to you my thanks for your participation and our desire for success in these efforts.

Thank you very much