

**INTERVENTION BY THE MEXICAN SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
CLAUDIA RUIZ MASSIEU, AT THE 7th SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES**

June 4, 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. Raúl Castro, President of the State Council and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba;

Doctor Alfonso Múnera Cavadía, Secretary General of the Association of Caribbean States;

Honourable Heads of State and Government;

Vice Presidents and Ministers of Foreign Affairs;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Acknowledgements and opening: importance of the Caribbean

It is indeed an honour to be here with all of you in the beautiful city of Havana, host of the 7th Summit of the Association of Caribbean States. I extend to you warm greetings from the President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, who I have the privilege of representing on this occasion.

Special thanks to President Raúl Castro for convening this meeting and also for the customary warm welcome received from the Cuban people.

Mexico is a Caribbean country. Our belonging to this sea and to this land is historical, cultural and represents what we refer to in my country as our “third border”, which stretches extensively and powerfully throughout 730 kilometres of coastline.

Our Caribbean coast constitutes a tremendous source of natural wealth and economic advantages, which we must preserve and strengthen. The Mexican coastline is made up of more than 11 thousand kilometres of beaches, infusing great dynamism into tourism and fishing and trade activities, but also compelling us to promote a sustainable perspective.

Thus, Mexico is an integral part of this mega-diverse region which, among other things, boasts of the second largest coral reef in the world, important archaeological sites and historical buildings, many of which are considered heritage of humanity.

Among the 25 Member States of the ACS, we account for 55% of the total population of Latin America and the Caribbean, 58.46% of trade, 28.5% of foreign direct investment, 86% of the regional tourist market, in addition to which, we possess more than 1 million square kilometres of protected areas.

Contributions of Mexico and priority issues

Therefore, from the Río Bravo to the Río Marouini [Guyana], from Grand Bahama [The Bahamas] to Toa [Cuba], Mexico's goal is and will continue to be, to consolidate our presence in the Caribbean, to be a proactive, conciliatory and constructive stakeholder, aimed at contributing to the wellbeing and prosperity of our peoples.

For that reason, over 20 years ago we promoted the creation of this Association of Caribbean States and 2 years ago, during the 6th Summit held in Mérida, the capital of the Mexican State of Yucatán, we proposed the creation of an extensive cooperation agenda, on issues of prime importance for the wellbeing of our citizens: such as tourism and the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea, trade, maritime transport and natural disaster risk reduction.

Today, I am delighted that once again we are meeting with the intention of deepening our cooperation and continuing joint efforts:

First of all, in tourism, one of the major driving forces behind our economies, as a generator of employment, the development of infrastructure and technologies associated with this industry.

For example, in 2016 thus far, the Caribbean has received 33% of cruise ships at the global level, followed by the Mediterranean with 18%. And according to the World Tourism Organisation, between January and April 2015 alone, tourist arrivals to the Caribbean increased by 7%.

It is due specifically to its value and beneficial impact that we have a sustainable vision of tourism in the ACS, which responds to the need to manage the use of our natural resources and conserve the essential

ecological processes of the biological diversity existing in the Greater Caribbean.

Secondly, I want to focus on intraregional connection. With the Short Distance Maritime Transport (SDMT) and the International Transit of Goods (TIM) projects, we are making strides in simplifying and harmonising customs procedures, creating facilities for the exchange of goods and services.

The objective is to approve a database and single transit document by the end of this year, for the purpose of identifying new sustainable trade routes. Proof of the maritime and air links that we have forged lies in the fact that between 2004 and 2014, goods exports have quadrupled, moving from 15 billion 368 million to 59 billion 742 million dollars.

Only a connected Caribbean will be able to tackle global challenges and trends and transform them into opportunities for productivity, integration and development.

Thirdly, we would like to touch on climate change, whose effects have already been felt in the Caribbean.

Global warming has gradually affected our seas and beaches, as well as the marine organism most vulnerable to this rise in temperature: the coral. In light of this scenario, **Mexico supports the two projects presented by Cuba**: the restoration of coral reefs and the recovery of the sandy coasts of the Caribbean.

Along that vein, we have observed in recent years that natural disasters have a grave impact on our development possibilities. The rise in sea level damages ecosystems, while the growing intensity of hurricanes and tropical storms threatens our countries' populations, infrastructure and economies, especially those of the Small Island Developing States.

In this regard, through the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in 2015, 59 geodetic stations were installed in all Caribbean countries. Mexico also collaborated on the

technology, providing 847 high resolution satellite images that would allow the enhancement of public policies in the areas of civil protection, environment and public health.

Mexico also reaffirms its willingness to establish cooperation schemes that would allow the sharing of good practices with respect to financial inclusion and access to and management of natural disaster risk insurance, aimed at strengthening the Caribbean's capabilities in these areas.

The projects promoted are yielding results and the advancements will continue to benefit the countries of the Caribbean, which have made these initiatives their own and which are using them to boost their own capabilities.

Mexico's hope is that our Association would continue to be the cooperation space where we could tackle **these and other priority issues** of our region, such as the implementation of the **2030 Development Agenda and the Fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals**.

We are undoubtedly facing what is a major challenge for everyone in the international community, but particularly for developing countries, since we have agreed to a change in paradigm and a new development model. **This scheme allowed us to achieve agreements designed for the medium and long term**, specifically by 2030. Our societies are demanding of us, and justifiably so, public policies **that transcend governments and political times, whose centre of gravity would be people and the exercising of their rights**.

One manifestation of this commitment is the creation of the **Regional Forum on Sustainable Development** in the framework of the ECLAC Session Period that we sponsored last week in Mexico City. The Forum will allow something which, as we are all aware, is essential for **public policy: following up implementation, evaluating results and changing the course when deemed necessary**. We hope that the Forum, which is of special importance to the Mexican Government, would allow us to advance together toward promoting sustainable development in our region.

Mr. Chairman:

I wish to take this opportunity to refer briefly to a few matters that have been mentioned throughout this session and which are reflected in the Declaration of Havana.

Definitive and lasting peace in Colombia is an aspiration not only of the Colombian people but the region as a whole. The Government of President Enrique Peña Nieto expresses its unwavering support for the efforts of President Juan Manuel Santos and we hope in the very near future, to be able to sign peace agreements that will bring an end to the longest armed conflict of the continent.

We have also listened attentively to **the words of President Nicolas Maduro regarding the situation in Venezuela**. We appreciate his commitment to inclusive, genuine and democratic dialogue. We hope that this dialogue would soon translate into agreements that would prove beneficial for the Venezuelan people and which would allow the country, through democracy and the rule of law, to regain its economic, political and social stability. I reiterate Mexico's willingness to support this effort.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The progress that we have made in the Association would not have been possible without the support and backing of **Dr. Alfonso Múnera**.

I want to congratulate you Doctor, on the four years of commitment at the head of our Association, four years that culminate with a successful report at this Summit. Without a doubt, your outstanding work resulted in Members developing a stronger commitment to an organised and effective agenda.

I am certain that **Dr. June Soomer**, who was elected yesterday as the new Secretary General of the ACS, will continue with effective leadership at the helm of this Association, to achieve even higher levels of cooperation and integration.

In a special way, I applaud the election of the first woman to the head of this Association. It is indicative of the importance that Mexico and all countries at this table have placed on the empowerment of women. You have Mexico's full support.

Your Excellency, President Castro:

I reiterate my thanks for your hospitality and for the work done as President *pro tempore* of the ACS.

Our meeting bears witness to the political will to continue the work of the Association. Let's join efforts in this dialogue space, so that during this 7th Summit, cultural and historical ties would be transformed into definite commitments and projects, always in support of the progress of our societies.

Mexico reiterates its commitment to continue collaborating toward an ever more resilient and prosperous Caribbean.

Thank you very much