



Caribbean Conference on Higher Education

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Speech for the Opening Ceremony

Regional Integration and Development The relevance of Functional Cooperation

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This Conference is most timely. Its focus on higher education priorities, challenges and opportunities as bridges for strengthening integration between the Caribbean and Latin America, is consistent with World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris in July 2009, the outcomes of the Fifth Summit of the Americas held in Port of Spain Trinidad and Tobago, April 2009 and the UNESCO declaration on Educational for All

The pleasure is however mine to bring you greetings from and address you on behalf of H.E Edwin Carrington Secretary General of the Caribbean Community who is unable to be here due to a very demanding schedule. I particularly wish to thank the OAS Department of Human Development, Education and Culture and the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean and the UNESCO Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) for organizing this Caribbean Conference and the Government of Suriname for its gracious hospitality. The letter of invitation to the Secretary General to give the keynote

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address listed as one of the desired outcomes the creation of a higher education Caribbean network of government and university representatives to work closely with the international community to advance the dialogue on higher education and strengthen the cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean. The Secretary General as asked me to say to you that the Caribbean Community Secretariat is a willing and enthusiastic partner in this initiative.

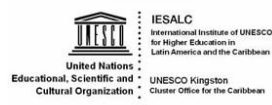
It is in the spirit of this commitment that I address you on the topic *integration and Development in the Caribbean*. Given the expert presentations listed in your conference programme I assumed that you require me to put in context the issues that relate to trends in higher education, quality assurance, science and technology, academic cooperation and the development of an agenda for higher education in the Caribbean. Consequently I will:

- Identify the salient features of regional integration,
- highlight the challenges of the regional integration movement, with special reference to the implementation of the CSME
- Point to the regional achievements, in particular the role of functional cooperation as a critical lever of regional integration
- Gaze toward an uncertain future with possibilities of strengthening the ties between Latin America and the Caribbean
- Wonder about what this future means for higher education in the region

Salient Features Of The Integration Process

Nowhere in recent times was it clearer about the role and purpose of the CARICOM movement than its collective response to global economic and

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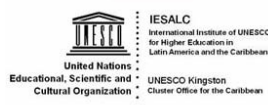
financial crisis of 2008-2009, its urgent countervailing actions for mitigation and adaptation that were undertaken; its active role in the rescue operations and in the proposed rehabilitation and restoration of Haiti after the devastation of the January 2010 earthquake; and the security measures put in place for ICC/CWC 2007 Cricket World Cup, that have become legacies for the future organization of a regional crime and security policy. All these have been well documented.

Regional integration is about enabling the coherence of a group of member states to compete more creditably in the globalized economic and political environments and to collectively stem the tide of international and other adversities, especially in these trying times. As one writer puts it, economic and political integration have been a perennial and neuralgic issue in the Caribbean agenda: “ the recognition of seminal truth that only a unified Caribbean politically and economically can save the region from fatal particularism is at least a century old”¹ .

Hence, the philosophical underpinning of the short lived West Indies Federation (1958-1962) is an example. This was followed by the revival of the integrationist ideal in the less ambitious Caribbean Free Trade Association (1968). Then there is the broadening of the scope of integration through the establishment of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), aimed at formalizing a customs Union, foreign policy coordination and functional cooperation as prescribed in the Treaty of Chaguaramus (1973). The inclusion of Suriname in the early 1990s signaled a move toward cultural diversity further illustrated by the inclusion of Haiti as a full member of the Community in 2003. Simultaneously were the initiation of the CARICOM Single Market in 2004, the establishment of the

¹ Quote from Sir Arthur Lewis in Mauricio Morreira and Eduardi Medoza Regional Integration What is in it for CARICOM ITIAL /IDB Working paper 29 , 2007

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Caribbean Court of Justice in 2005 and the ultimate ambitious target set to achieve by 2013, full mobility of goods, services and people and the harmonization of economic policies in a **CARICOM Single Market and Economy** .

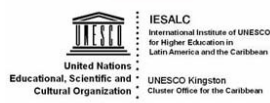
The Challenges Of The Regional Integration Movement

The evaluations of the Caribbean Community are normally cast in the mould of the ultimate ambitious target of a CSME which not even the most acclaimed regional integration movement, the European Community, has achieved. This is mainly due to the fact that the political and economic realities are not fully appreciated based on what gains can be realistically expected from the CSME process and what policies should be explored to maximise these gains

Recent discussions by a Think Tank on A strategic Plan for Regional Development in CARICOM coordinated by Professor Norman Girvan seek to establish the macro-economic context of CARICOM's development, to review its components with what is called the single development vision for CARICOM and then to match this approach with national development strategies. Of 14 Member States in the Community, 12 participate in the CSME process. Overall there are wide differences among these countries in resource endowments, human capital, economic infrastructure, institutional capabilities and their associated export specializations suggest that *divergence and differentiation rather than convergence and homogeneity* will continue to be the norm in the near future ²

² Girvan Strategic Plan for Development (CARICOM) Draft March 2010

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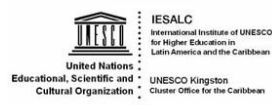
What is clear is that the traditional gains from regional integration – whether in terms of enlarged market effect or competitive/allocational gains -- are bound to be limited because the Caribbean economies display a high degree of openness, the enlarged market is relatively small and countries have relatively similar factor endowments. But impediments to an accelerated approach to the CSME are compounded by failure of the region to reach agreement on several important prerequisites for a “single economy”. Among them are the establishment of a monetary Union (not totally achieved by the EU), the adoption of a CARICOM investment Agreement, the harmonization of tax policies and provision for fiscal incentives.

At the same time successes have been recorded with respect to the establishment and implementation of the Regional Development Fund (in Barbados), the replacement of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Mechanism with the Office of Trade Negotiations within the Directorate of Trade and Economic Integration of the Caribbean Community Secretariat, and the establishment of the Caribbean Competition Commission (in Suriname) These are all critical to sustaining a level playing field, coordinating trade negotiations and guaranteeing the application of common standards in trade and production in the Community, perquisites for a sustainable integration process..

It is also generally acknowledged that the basic rationale for CARICOM integration is to overcome the constraints on development specially associated with small size. Hence the principal aims of integration include:

- Achieving economies of scale
- Sharing costs in operation of common services
- Pooling bargaining power in external relations

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- Pursuing synergies derived from combining human, financial and other resources of member states in the development effort

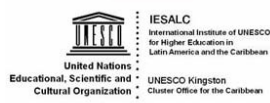
While the first, normally associated with market integration and common policies is within the comfort zone of macro economic analysts, “the last three involve functional cooperation in one way or another and therefore constitute the principal challenge for the policy researcher”³.

This is the dilemma. Despite the trade creating reforms of the 1990s and 2000s and the possible determinants of their impacts, there is evidence that the magnitude of the gains have not been significant. At the same time integration in the area of “non tradables” i.e. services related to the countries’ social and physical infra-structure (as we will see) have over the years demonstrated substantial successes that are often neglected by focusing strictly on outcomes of the CSME

While acknowledging this implementation deficit, most objective analysts agree on the magnitude of the tasks designed to achieve the CSME. In this regard considerable technical work has been done on development of a CARICOM Investment Code, a CARICOM Financial Services Agreement, on proposals for the reform of Community Governance and on the free movement of additional categories of skilled labour. The bottlenecks are by and large due to national resistance, changes in governments and delays in the facilitation of the necessary national regulations or legislation to bring these policies and programmes into effect. In a more profound sense accelerated approaches are stymied by the sustained preoccupation with the notion that CARICOM is

³ Girvan Strategic Plan for Regional Development Draft Report 2010

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comprised of “sovereign states” which would be eroded by the application of “shared sovereignty”

Writing in a recent issue of the *Integrationist*⁴, Prog CY Thomas raised the following problematique: “Given the critical juncture at which the Region finds itself, it is not altogether surprising that harsh comments and severe doubts have been expressed in many quarters about the readiness, fitness, seriousness, and even purposefulness of the contemporary leadership elites in moving the Caribbean [forward]” He went on to suggest: that “It is pertinent to this discourse, however, to consider whether these positions are reasonable” and offers the view that “one test of their reasonableness must surely be whether the development record of the Region [does indeed] support such a harsh negative judgment of their stewardship.”

Regional Achievements, In Particular the Role of Functional Cooperation as a Critical Lever of Regional Integration

It would be difficult for anyone to deny, with an objective frame of mind, that in general much economic development has been achieved in the Region. This can readily be seen, if we examine the outcomes based on universally accepted indicators of development: income, economic structure, health, education, safety-nets, governance and even perhaps quality of life. The gains have been, undoubtedly, very unevenly distributed, both across and within countries. Also, many gaps and deficits remain, and some of these are huge. Nonetheless, there have been significant development gains to the Region. The evidence is there to see in the ratings of the CARICOM countries in the human

⁴ A publication series from the Joint UWI CARICOM policy programme

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Development Index, the rates of enrolment in tertiary education, the health indicators especially reductions in infant mortality .Some outstanding examples of development in the region are illustrated by the following⁵

- Based on the world's most acclaimed development indicators e.g the UNDP's (HDI, GEM, GDI, HPI) measures, all the countries, with the exception of Haiti, are classified at a medium-level of development or better. Four are classed at a high-level of human development.
- Based on income indicators the Region also does well. It is, on average, by no means the typical poor developing set of countries. The average per capita GNP in 2008 was about US\$5,600, including Haiti (US\$460 and Guyana US\$950). In five countries it exceeded US\$7,500 and for the small states of the OECS (US\$5,800) it exceeded the regional average
- Since Independence several countries have achieved significant diversification of their inherited colonial economies. This has mainly been due to the development of the services sector, particularly travel and tourism. This applies to both their production and export structures.
- Export concentration has been significantly reduced and the expansion of imports, reveal some of the income gains and improvements to domestic well-being
- In health, all the countries (except Haiti) had achieved the Alma Ata goals of Health for All by year 2000.

⁵ C.Y Thomas (Ibid)

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- The Caribbean Commission on Health and Development in its Report 2006, also forecasts that, “there is a real possibility that [the Region] will achieve or surpass most of the Millennium Development Goals”: Life expectancy is at the level of developed countries [74+years] and Infant mortality rate has fallen from over 200 per 1000 live births to 12 in some cases

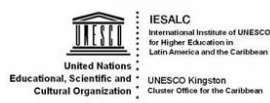
The Report of the Caribbean Commission on Health and Development further states that “health services utilisation, as measured by immunization coverage, is a success story and that health services coverage in the percentage of pregnant women attended by trained personnel during pregnancy ... is virtually 100%”⁶

Can these economic, social and political achievements be attributed to the regional integration process? **The answer is yes** and the explanation is to be found in the application of functional cooperation underpinning the CSME process

We have already alluded to the value of functional cooperation which relates not only to non tradable goods but also as mechanisms that cut across those activities normally considered as an essential feature of the CSME. The Report of the Task Force on Functional Cooperation 2008, fully illustrates the strides that have been made through cooperation in many areas. Among them are: The University of the West Indies, (established in 1948 as a college of London University and becoming a regional institution in 1962), the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) established in 1973, the Caribbean Cooperation in Health inaugurated in 1983, the new architecture in crime and security in the

⁶ Caribbean Commission on Health and Development (Chair Sir George Alleyne)

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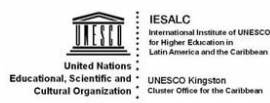
post 9-11 era spearheaded by the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), the critical role being played by the CARICOM Community Climate Change Centre in helping the Region to marshal its resources to deal with climate change. Then there is the outstanding case of the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV AIDS that has been designated by the UN as an international best practice

The recently establish unit of functional cooperation in the office of the Secretary General has spearheaded a regional work programme for 2010-2011 that highlights functional cooperation priorities in tourism and transportation. This is an interesting development that accords in the first instance with the proposals resulting from the recommendations of the 2008 Ministerial Summit on Regional Tourism

In addition in the area of foreign policy and diplomacy the "sovereign states" of the Caribbean Community can identify the value of acting collectively in the negotiating theatres, internationally.

Pivotal to the agenda for effective functional cooperation are the regional institutions that formulate regional programmes and policies in a variety of areas including agriculture, quality and standards, meteorology, disaster management, fisheries management, and most recently established Caribbean Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (CAFHSA) in Suriname. In this regard too, the CARICOM Community annual meeting of approximately 25 regional institutions provides an opportunity for elevating the role of functional cooperation through a formal process of sharing information, reducing duplication, and monitoring and evaluation of the performance of these critical

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drivers of development. One of the most significant developments in this regard is the recent decision of the CARICOM Heads of Government to establish a Caribbean Public Health Authority in a phased basis between 2010 and 2014 resulting in the merger of five regional health institutions into one agency

At the same time , the proposed Regional accreditation authority, important to the maintenance of education standards throughout the region remains outstanding and perhaps demands the attention of discussions at this forum. The assistance of Ministers of Education is particularly necessary in bringing this important mechanism into being.

Gazing toward an uncertain future with possibilities of strengthening the ties between Latin America and the Caribbean

The process of regional integration is now taking on new dimensions as countries reconfigure their priorities and even their loyalties that tend to send alarms ringing through the hearts of the traditional regionalists. What is emerging is what Denis Benn⁷ refers to as *the variable geometry of integration* in which countries belong to varying regional groups simultaneously. The OECS provides the most enduring lesson as its over 25 year sub regional organization has moved toward achievement of a single economy at a much faster rate than the larger CARICOM Community to which it also belongs. The membership of some CARICOM and OECS countries in ALBA a grouping of certain South and Central American States led by Venezuela, the South American Association led by Brazil to which Guyana and Suriname are members, the Central American integration

⁷ Denis Benn "Tipping through the raindrops of Sovereignty" 2008

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system to which Belize belongs in addition to the Association of Caribbean States, and the Caribbean Development Cooperation (CDCC) to which member states of CARICOM also belong. Then there is the declaration resulting from the Mexico consultation in January 2010 to establish a new integration association for LAC. All these point to a need for unraveling the regional maze of institutional affiliation. It is difficult to predict the future. No doubt this forum will discuss those strategies for an accelerating higher educational cooperation among and between institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean

The future of higher education in the scenario of a variable geometry

Whatever the directions of the integration processes in the future, countries of the Region must deal with the principles and application of an educational strategy that would make their citizens competitive in a world defined by ever changing priorities. There are so many scenarios that our policy makers could consider as they chart the future of higher education in this changing environment. A few highlights would suffice:

- Continuing the discourse as to the best way to rationalize the educational system, making it more efficient and ensuring that it responds adequately to the needs of the Region.
- Establishing clearly what are the basic criteria for the conversion of community colleges or the linkages between Universities and Community Colleges bearing in mind the expectation of a University contributing toward a quality product including research that is incapable of competing on the world's stage

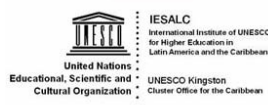
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- Standing up to the challenges for rolling back on the investment in higher education by finding ways to strengthen functional cooperation at the post secondary level, thereby increasing attempts for pursuing shared or joint higher educational programmes
- Finding the formula for the **use of ICT** more effectively to increase access, maintain quality, through more efficient systems of distance education and e-learning
- Responding to the dynamic of a variable regional geometry to accelerate the intensification of linguistic capability, necessary to reduce the “cultural” barriers
- Considering the approaches to deal with the increasing trends toward **trade in education** by establishing those educational and cultural niches that give the region a comparative advantage. This involves paying particular attention of the roles of off shore higher educational institutions and ensuring that there objectives are compatible with the national or regional vision of North-South and South-South collaboration
- Fostering greater collaboration with the private sector for scholarships and other types of work-study programmes to develop highly trained professionals with the required competencies in research and research and development.
 - Recognizing that the formula for funding higher education is constrained by the availability of adequate resources and thereby attracting support from a variety of partners nationally, regionally and internationally
 - Finding the formula to facilitate staff/student exchange programmes to foster greater regional understanding and cultural integration

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In the final analysis the future offers overwhelming opportunities through functional cooperation in education

- Collaboration among higher level institutions to rationalize programmes and complement rather duplicate offerings
- Promoting Centres of excellence
- Embracing the opportunities such as those offered by the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN) for interconnectivity among institutions of higher education not only among CARICOM countries but with our Latin American and international partners

The future beckons us to a higher level of creativity. Maybe we can **continue to demonstrate through functional cooperation in areas like education, how to build a society as the foundation for sustainable economic development.** In this way we can truly achieve regional integration that is meaningful for all

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