

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE MAXINE McCLEAN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & FOREIGN TRADE
AT
THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE EMBASSY OF BARBADOS
TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2010

Vice Minister Li

The Honourable Richard Sealy
Minister of Tourism

Your Excellency Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford,
first resident Ambassador of Barbados to the
People's Republic of China, and Lady Sandiford

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished representatives of Chinese
Institutions and Organisations

Barbadian Nationals

Friends

Nimen hao [NEE-MEN-HOW]

Huan ying [HWAN YING]

Today marks the end of one journey and the beginning of a new journey, full of hope and opportunity.

It has been some time that, in Barbados, we have been considering the necessity of opening a mission here in China. Our two countries have enjoyed a relationship both deep and broad for more than 33 years. The relationship has been marked, in the last two decades or so, by the phenomenal and peaceful rise of the People's Republic of China. The consequence has been the enhancement of its relations not only with Barbados but with other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The importance China attaches to its relationship with the Region is well documented in the published White Paper on relations between China and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Faced with these developments, the need for Barbados to enhance its diplomatic representation

in China became ever-more pressing. In this regard, I wish here to pay tribute to the important role played in building and strengthening by successive non-resident Ambassadors of Barbados to the People's Republic of China and the distinguished ambassadors of China to Barbados. Together, they have built and strengthened the relationship between our countries.

Notwithstanding the value of their work, it became evident that Barbados needed to take its relationship to the next level. That is why we are gathered here today.

Let me emphasise that this is indeed a big step for a country of our size. At present, Barbados has only 12 Embassies and Consulates-General. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of them are in the Western Hemisphere: in North and South America, our immediate neighbours. The remainder are in the capitals of traditional regional

powers in Western Europe and at the principal seats of the United Nations. This Embassy, our 13th overseas mission, therefore constitutes our first, and at present only, mission anywhere beyond our "traditional" sphere of diplomatic action.

Given the strength and depth of the relationship between our two countries as well as China's consistent outreach and support to our region, Beijing was the obvious choice.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, through you Vice Minister Li, the various branches of the Government of the People's Republic of China for the assistance provided to Barbados in establishing this Embassy we are here today officially to open. It has been reported to me that the cooperation afforded Ambassador Sandiford and his staff has been of the highest level. For this, on behalf of the Government and

people of Barbados, I wish to express our sincere appreciation.

As I indicated at the start of these brief remarks, today marks the end of one journey: the journey which has brought Barbados to the point of opening an embassy here in Beijing. I also said it was the start of a new journey. That journey will lead to a further development of the relationship in the many areas where we cooperate now and where we will come to cooperate in the future.

It is my firm belief that, despite the disparity in size between Barbados and China, the potential for enhanced relations is great. The Honourable Richard Sealy, our Minister of Tourism is present here today and has been having meetings in Beijing and will have further meetings in Shanghai in the coming days. I myself will be going to Shanghai tomorrow to participate in the Expo and in an Investment Seminar. Tourism and

investment are two areas where there is great potential. Culture, education, and energy are others where relations can be developed to mutual benefit of the people of both our countries.

These points were poignantly underlined by President Hu Jintao to Ambassador Sandiford some 3 months ago when he presented his credentials. The differences between our two countries may be great but what we can achieve together is, without question, even greater.

In closing, allow me to pay particular tribute to H.E. Ambassador Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford, Barbados' first resident Ambassador in China. Ambassador Sandiford is, what I believe is called in Mandarin a "lao peng you" [LA-OH PUNG YO] an old friend of China. The appointment of a former Prime Minister as our ambassador here is a sign of the importance we attach to this relationship. I wish to seize this opportunity to thank him for all the efforts he has already made and will

continue to make as he discharges his weighty responsibilities.

I now have the honour and pleasure of declaring the Embassy of Barbados to the People's Republic of China officially open!
