

Statement on the Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation Platform

Transcript of remarks by Prime Minister Mottley following the signing of the Formation Agreement for the Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation Platform between Barbados and Guyana:

“Mr. President, I also want to thank Senior Minister Walcott and Minister Ramdin for allowing us to be in this position this evening to allow us to sign in this follow-up agreement between our two countries and to elevate it to a strategic partnership.

We believe that this is absolutely necessary. I was saying to Minister Ramdin that this is our third trip to Suriname in four years, and that is in spite of COVID in taking us through a two-year hiatus in our relationship.

And the truth is that we have seen, already, substantive engagement between our private sectors. We’ve seen substantive engagement with ordinary people and in sports and in other areas. And we are also seeing a very strong and continuous relationship with the government and people of Suriname, because we believe that we have an obligation to work with people in our neighborhood. And you are one of those who, for every reason, it is only language and history that have separated us thus far. And we have come to this point over the last few years to say that that should no longer be a barrier.

Suriname is a major player in fisheries. Suriname is the location of CAHFSA, which is responsible for the regulation of sanitary and phytosanitary measures within our community. And if we want to expand our trade in food, if we want to have food security, CAHFSA is going to play a critical role in allowing us to be able to do so.

Suriname is also the home of the Regional Competition Commission and I have gone on record as recently as last month, again, making the point when the Minister of Finance from Suriname was in Barbados, when we met with the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, that we have now to do better by ensuring that we do not duplicate complex institutions at the national level, when we can follow the example of the Caribbean Court of Justice, where we have a

strong regional institution with both national and regional jurisdiction, allowing us to be able to attract the best and the brightest in the region, to be able to do the levels of regulation that we need – whether this is in the Competition Commission, the Regional Competition Commission, or establishing a Regional Financial Services Commission – these are the things that more than ever we need to do to ensure that we are not duplicating resources in each of our countries at a time when those regional institutions can allow us to perform more efficiently, more effectively, but also to be able, hopefully, to save funds, to allow us to deal with other urgent matters within our domestic arrangements.

President Santohki, we have worked perhaps closer in the last two years because of COVID. And the truth is, even though it led to a hiatus in the Brokopondo agreement, in part particularly with the physical exchange, especially when we were getting ready to do the exchange of workers in the agricultural sector and persons coming here, what we have been able to do in the interim has been to cooperate significantly with respect to issues with the pandemic and with climate. And we want to build on that going forward now.

Suriname has had floods this year that has decimated production in your country. And we empathize with your people and we share with your people. And I've already spoken to you about the assistance that Barbados will do, because with every little thing we have come from a country where whatever we have, we share because we realize that today for you, tomorrow for me, and that has been the approach that we take with respect to family. And the people of Suriname are family to the people of Barbados, as one Caribbean Community.

I want to thank you and your people and your government for the warm hospitality. The truth is that every time we come to Suriname, we are overwhelmed by the warmth and the hospitality of the people. And I hope that my people in Barbados reciprocate when your people come as well.

I know that Minister Ramdin also had a set of very good meetings both with the public and private sector in April, and I therefore look forward to this agreement unlocking that potential for our two countries and our people in the interests of us, but also the wider the Caribbean community.

Thank you very much.”