

Remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados

Senator The Honourable Maxine McClean

On the occasion of the First Ministerial Meeting of the Community of Latin American and  
Caribbean States (CELAC) – China Forum

Beijing, People's Republic of China

January 7-9, 2015

***On the theme of “New Platform, New Starting Point, New Opportunity –  
Joint Efforts to Promote China-Latin America and the Caribbean Partnership of  
Comprehensive Cooperation”***

Foreign Minister Wang Yi

Honourable Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

Other dignitaries,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I convey to you the greetings of the people and Government of Barbados, and in particular the best wishes of the Right Honourable Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados.

I also take this opportunity to express my delegation's deepest appreciation for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to us here in this most exhilarating of cities, Beijing.

This CELAC/China Forum is the beginning of what Barbados believes will, in time, come to be known as a milestone in international partnerships among developing nations, large and small. We fully anticipate that the fruit of this Forum will not only be greater collaboration between the governments of China and the nations of CELAC, but also a crucible of cooperation with the potential for a direct, positive and lasting impact on the lives of all our peoples.

Barbados is convinced that the CELAC-China Forum offers an unprecedented opportunity for the exploration of common interests, alliance-building and the sharing of best practices amongst like-minded states. CELAC's relationship with China will play a fundamental role both as a supporting partner and in the development of cooperative relations. New practices of cooperation in areas of social cohesion, cultural and infrastructure integration, regional strategic resources allocation will emerge. While we do not seek to replace existing groupings, we can work to create a truly transformative partnership for development.

However, this initiative can only reach its full potential as a platform of growth and opportunity for our peoples if we commit ourselves at this moment, in this place, to the work necessary to deliver on the promise of the CELAC-China Forum..

Words - no matter how soaring the rhetoric, no matter how honourable and noble the intentions - will be nothing more than 'sound and fury signifying nothing' without achievable and quantifiable plans and programmes. We must therefore commit to the formulation and implementation of programmes which are strategically targeted to meet the real and tangible goals of the sustainable human development our peoples as well as the economic growth and well-being of our countries.

Barbados warmly welcomes the inclusion of a number of fundamental issues of relevance to small island developing economies in the China-Latin American and Caribbean Countries Cooperation Plan for 2015-2019. The special vulnerabilities faced by small island developing states and which serve to constrain our development are well known. We are therefore heartened that the plan gives attention to cooperation on climate change within the framework of South-South cooperation, as well as to sustainable renewable energy and disaster risk management issues.

In this CELAC-China Forum we have the birth of a new body based on mutual respect and the friendship of nations. Let us commit to give vibrant life and purpose to this momentous partnership for development. The people of our nations in the Caribbean, Latin America and China are depending on us to take decisive action in their name. We cannot fail to answer their call.

Thank you.

