

60th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PLENARY

**AGENDA ITEM 13: “THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: PROGRESS IN
FASHIONING A REGION OF PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND
DEVELOPMENT”**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. PAULETTE BETHEL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

ON BEHALF OF CARICOM MEMBER STATES

31 OCTOBER 2005

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Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations. Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to extend condolences to the Governments and Peoples of Central America in the aftermath of the recent series of natural disasters that have resulted in the loss of life and destruction of property in the countries of the region, particularly in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. CARICOM, a region composed of developing countries, that has also endured the ravages of natural disasters, is well aware of the negative impact that these events will bring to bear on efforts to advance development initiatives and, thus, we trust that the countries of the Central America would be provided with sustained assistance, so that advances which have already been made are not jeopardized.

Mr. President,

Since the General Assembly took up consideration of the *Situation in Central America*, we have witnessed a renaissance of this region into one of peace, freedom, democracy and development. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for the informative annual reports on this agenda item. These reports have highlighted the unique realities of each country in the region in, *inter alia*, the areas of governance, human rights, public security, judicial reform, regional and extra-regional institution-building, and border issues. We acknowledge the many challenges that each country has encountered, but more importantly, we commend the countries of Central America for the efforts made, in spite of the challenges, to engender more peaceful, democratic and equitable societies. We also recognize, with satisfaction, the international assistance rendered to the region as outlined in the reports of the Secretary-General.

Mr. President,

An important aspect of the consolidation of peace in the region has been the regional integration process facilitated by the Central American Integration System (SICA). The SICA symbolizes the new face of Central America. Today, one of our fellow CARICOM Member States, Belize, participates as a member of that System.

At the initiative of Belize, the CARICOM and the SICA celebrated their first Summit in 2002 and agreed to reinforce inter-regional relations and partnerships. In the Joint Declaration issued at the conclusion of that Summit, Caribbean and Central American leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation and to coordinate actions in areas such as education, health, poverty elimination, environment, trade and investment. This historic Summit highlighted the reality that there exists much common ground between our two regions.

The recently concluded CARICOM-Costa Rica Free Trade Agreement signals CARICOM's desire to foster closer ties with countries in Central America. In fact, the Agreement was seen, not only as an opportunity to strengthen trade between CARICOM and Costa Rica, but also as an opportunity to enhance our social, political, cultural and environmental cooperation alliances. Thus, we in CARICOM look forward to the entry into force of that Agreement.

Given the aforementioned undertakings, which have all served to enhance the CARICOM-Central America partnership, we in CARICOM are hopeful that a peaceful resolution to the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute is achieved in the near-term. We take note that the two countries have agreed to a framework for negotiation and confidence building measures that seeks to maintain and deepen their friendly relationship until the territorial dispute is permanently resolved. We are encouraged by this new development and pledge our continued support for a just and lasting resolution to this dispute.

Mr. President,

CARICOM recognizes the efforts of the Central American leaders and their peoples, as well as those of the international community that have influenced the region's transformation. There are, however, lingering and new challenges, some of which – the Secretary-General's report acknowledges – have been generated by external factors. We trust that the international community will maintain its full support to the region, particularly in the face of these challenges.

Thank you, Mr. President.