

STATEMENT BY A GROUP OF CONCERNED CARIBBEAN CITIZENS
CALLING FOR FULL AND PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE CARIFORUM-EC
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA)

We note with interest the recent statement by President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana in which he observed that the Caribbean stands to gain little from the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) recently negotiated with Europe. President Jagdeo stated that the agreement was concluded against the backdrop of a threat that tariffs would be imposed on Caribbean exports of sugar, bananas and manufactured goods to the European community as of January 1st 2008 if the region did not meet the timeline of December 31, 2007 -- the date when the WTO waiver for the trade arrangements under the Cotonou Agreement was set to expire. He suggested that the shift from the principle of preferential trade to one of reciprocity introduces a new set of challenges that the Caribbean is ill equipped to face.

We welcome the candour with which President Jagdeo has now raised several issues that have so far been overlooked by other government leaders, officials and negotiators in the public discussion of the EPA to the extent warranted by the far-reaching consequences of the legally and permanently binding articles of the agreement. We believe that the Caribbean public was not kept fully abreast of the potential implications of the EPA for the course of the region's economic relations, not only with Europe, but with all other trading partners as it may become a blueprint for future trade negotiations. It is regrettable that Caribbean governments and responsible officials did not keep the public better informed about the progress of the negotiations and the 'bullying' and 'broken promises' by Europe to which the President of Guyana referred. We believe that opportunities must be found to remedy this deficit in the future, and that the situation calls for full disclosure, for public explanation of the shortcomings as well as any anticipated benefit of the EPA, and for open participation in a discussion of its implications for our economies and for the livelihoods of our peoples.

It is our understanding that the EPA is due to be signed by Cariforum Ministers on March 15 and to be provisionally applied from April 1. After that, Caribbean countries will be locked in for all time to the provisions of this legally binding instrument. It will be very difficult, and in all likelihood very costly, to amend the EPA after it comes into force. We are urgently proposing that more time and opportunity be provided for a full and public review of the EPA in order that all its aspects are explained and understood and relevant objections taken into account.

January 20, 2008.

Signatures

1. David Abdullah, President, Federation of Independent Trade Unions and NGOs (FITUN), Trinidad and Tobago
2. Diana Abraham, student, York University, Toronto
3. Andaiye, Red Thread, Guyana
4. Association of Development Agencies, Kingston, Jamaica
5. Havelock Brewster, Honorary Professor, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social

and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies

6. Hazel Brown, Coordinator, Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women
7. Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) Regional Secretariat, Trinidad and Tobago
8. Dr. Robert Carr, Caribbean Centre of Communication for Development, Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus
9. Dr. Dennis C. Canterbury, Visiting Professor, Center for Development Studies University of Cape Coast, Ghana; and Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Eastern Connecticut State University, USA
10. Komal Chand, President, Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union
11. Flavia Cherry, National Representative, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) – St. Lucia, ASPIRE St. Lucia and the St. Lucia National Organization of Women
12. Annalee Davis, Independent Visual Artist, Barbados
13. Kathleen Drayton, President, Barbados Association of Retired Persons Inc.
14. Reginald Dumas, retired public servant, Trinidad and Tobago
15. Dr. Honor Ford-Smith, York University, Toronto (Jamaica)
16. Dr. Norman Girvan, Professorial Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations at the UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago
17. Dr. Cecilia Greene, Sociologist, Dominica/USA
18. Chanzo Greenidge, Trinidad and Tobago
19. Leyland Hazlewood, CEO, Dimpex Inc, and former Consul in South Africa for the Republic of Guyana
20. Caroline Hossein, University of Toronto
21. Dr. Julian R. Hunte, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the Government of St. Lucia
22. Cathal Healy-Singh, Environmental Engineer, Rights Action Group, Trinidad and Tobago
23. John Hunte, The Organic Growers and Consumers Association and The Bawden Environmental Park Group, Barbados
24. Carlos James, Journalist, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
25. Deacon Mike James, Columnist, Catholic Standard, Trinidad and Tobago
26. Vernon Khelawan, journalist, Trinidad and Tobago
27. Mary K. King, journalist, Trinidad and Tobago
28. Dr. Claremont Kirton, Head, Department of Economics, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica
29. Akim Ade Larcher, Human Rights Activist, St. Lucia/Toronto
30. Josanne Leonard, Caribbean Cultural Industries Network
31. Dr. Patsy Lewis, Senior Fellow, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies, Mona.
32. Ian MacDonald, writer, past Chief Executive Officer of the Sugar Association of the Caribbean
33. Susan Mahon, Environment, People & Information
34. Dr. Woodville Marshall, Emeritus Professor, University of the West Indies
35. John Maxwell, Journalist, Jamaica
36. Dr. Brian Meeks, Professor of Social and Political Change, Director, Centre for Caribbean Thought, Department of Government, University of the West Indies, Mona.

37. Signaira Merce, student, University of the Netherlands Antilles
38. Dr. Debbie Mohammed, Specialist, International Trade and Competitiveness
39. Shantal Munro- Knight, Snr Programme Officer Caribbean Policy Development Centre
40. Dennis Pantin, Professor of Economics and Head, Department of Economics, St. Augustine Campus, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago
41. PAPDA (Haitian Advocacy Platform for an Alternative Development)
42. Kari Polanyi-Levitt, Emeritus Professor, McGill University, Montreal
43. Dr. Rhoda Reddock, Social Scientist, Trinidad and Tobago
44. Regional Executive Committee of the Assembly of Caribbean People (ACP)
45. Dr. Nestor Rodriguez, University of Toronto
46. Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, Principal, Critchlow Labour College
47. Cecil Ryan, Managing Director, Projects Promotion Limited, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
48. Sir Ronald Sanders - Business Executive, Writer and former Ambassador to the WTO
49. Raffique Shah, Journalist, Trinidad and Tobago
50. Pat Sheerattan-Bisnauth
51. Mohabir Singh, CEO, Guyana Furniture Manufacturing Ltd. and President of Guyana Manufacturers' Association
52. Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination, Guyana
53. Dr. C. Y. Thomas, Distinguished Professor, University of Guyana
54. Rampersaud Tiwari, retired public servant, Guyana/Toronto
55. Dr. David Trotman, Department of History/Division of Humanities, York University, Canada
56. Dr. Alissa Trotz, Sociologist, University of Toronto
57. Judith Wedderburn, Coalition for Community Participation in Governance (CCPG)
58. Dr. Michael Witter, Department of Economics, The University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica

For more information on the EPA and to add your name to this list, visit www.normangirvan.info