CARICOM: A history of the Caribbean Common Market

History of CARICOM

The establishment of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) was the result of a 15-year effort to fulfill the hope of regional integration which was born with the establishment of the British West Indies Federation in 1958. The Federation consisted of 10 territories - all the present Member States of CARICOM. - with the exception of Belize, The Bahamas and Guyana. It was a political union, with a Federal Government drawn from Members of Parliament directly elected by the people of all the member-islands. Although a plan for a Customs Union was drawn up, emphasis was not placed on the economic aspect of Federation during the four years of its existence. Economically, the Region remained as fragmented as it had been for centuries and not even Free Trade was introduced between the Member Countries during this period. The West Indies Federation came to an end in 1962, but its end, in many ways, must be regarded as the real beginning of what is now the Caribbean Community.

The end of the Federation meant the beginning of more serious efforts on the part of the political leaders in the Caribbean to strengthen the ties existing between the islands by providing for the continuance and strengthening of the areas of cooperation that existed during the Federation. To this end, in mid-1962 a Common Services Conference was called to take decisions on the maintenance of these services, the major ones among them being the University of the West Indies (UWI), founded in 1948, and the Regional Shipping Services set up during the Federation to control the operation of the two ships donated by the Government of Canada - the Federal Palm and the Federal Maple.

The Caribbean Meteorological Service was established in the following year, 1963, and along with the UWI and the Regional Shipping Service, represented the nucleus of Caribbean Cooperation immediately after the end of the Federation.

In addition to the decision to continue the process of inter-island cooperation, notwithstanding the dissolution of the Federation, the year 1962 also marked two important events crucial to the development of a Caribbean Community; the attainment of independence by both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in August of that year and, with it, the power to control their own domestic and external affairs.

In announcing its intention to withdraw from the Federation, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago proposed the creation of a Caribbean Economic Community, consisting not only of the 10 members of the Federation, but also of the three Guianas and all the islands of the Caribbean Sea - both independent and non-independent.

To discuss this concept, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago convened the First Heads of Government Conference in July 1963, in Trinidad and Tobago. This conference was attended by the leaders of Barbados, British Guiana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. At this Conference, the leaders of these four Caribbean countries all spoke clearly of the need for close cooperation in the Region using as reference the existing movements at the time for regional cooperation in Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The First Heads of Government Conference proved to be the first in a series of Conferences among the leaders of Commonwealth Caribbean countries.

In July 1965, talks between the Premiers of Barbados and British Guiana and the Chief Minister of Antigua on the possible establishment of a Free Trade in the Caribbean resulted in the announcement that month of definite plans to establish such a Free Trade Area. This was carried further in December of the same year when the Heads of Government of Antigua, Barbados and British Guiana signed an Agreement at Dickenson Bay, Antigua, to set up the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA).

In the interest of common action and close cooperation among all the Commonwealth Caribbean territories, the actual start of the Free Trade Association was deliberately delayed in order to allow the rest of the Region, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica and all the Windward and Leeward islands - to become members of the newly-formed Free Trade Association.



The Fourth Heads of Government Conference agreed to establish CARIFTA formally and to include as many Commonwealth Caribbean countries as possible in a new Agreement of December 1965. It was also agreed that the Free Trade Association was to be the beginning of what would eventually become the Caribbean Common Market which would be established (through a number of stages) for the achievement of "a viable economic Community of Caribbean Territories".

At the same time, in recognition of their special development problems, several special provisions were agreed upon for the benefit of the now OECS States and Belize. The new CARIFTA Agreement came into effect on May 1, 1968, with the participation of Antigua, Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. The original idea to permit all the territories in the Region to participate in the Association was achieved later that year with the entry of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent on July 1, 1968 and of Jamaica and Montserrat on August 1, 1968. British Honduras (Belize) became a member in May 1971.

Emerging also from the 1967 Heads of Government Conference was the establishment of the Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Secretariat on May 1, 1968 in Georgetown Development Bank (CDB) in October 1969 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

It was at the Seventh Heads of Government Conference that the Caribbean Leaders decided to transform CARIFTA into a Common Market and establish the Caribbean Community of which the Common Market would be an integral part.

At the Eighth Heads of Government Conference held in April 1973 in Georgetown, Guyana, the decision to establish the Caribbean Community taken at the October 1972 Conference, was brought to fruition with the consideration of Heads of Government of the draft legal instrument and with the signing of the Georgetown Accord by all the members of CARIFTA with the exception of Antigua and Montserrat. The Accord provided for the signature of the Caribbean Community Treaty on July 4 and its coming into effect on August 1, 1973, among the then four independent countries: Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The Georgetown Accord also provided that the other eight territories - Antigua, British Honduras, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent which signed the Accord would become full members of the Community by May 1, 1974.

The Caribbean Community and Common Market - CARICOM - was established by the Treaty of Chaguaramas, signed on 4 July 1973, by Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad (the MDCs) and the Movement came into effect on 1 August 1973. Subsequently, eight other Caribbean territories (the LDC's)joined CARICOM. The Bahamas became the 13th Member State of the Community on July 4, 1983.

Caribbean Community & Common Market - CARICOM

Formed by the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973, as a movement towards unity in the Caribbean.

Secretariat: Bank of Guyana Building,
P.O. Box 10827,
Georgetown, GUYANA.
Telephone: 69281-9
Cable Address: CARIBSEC
Telex: 2263 CARISEC GY

Members

Antigua and Barbuda
The Bahamas (of the community only)
Barbados
Belize
Dominica
Grenada
Guyana
Jamaica
Montserrat
Saint Christopher and Nevis
Saint Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Trinidad and Tobago

Organization

The Caribbean Community has three objectives:

(a) economic co-operation through the Caribbean Common Market;

(b) co-ordinator of foreign policy among the independent Member States; and

(c) common services and co-operation in functional matters such as health, education and culture, communications and industrial relations.

Heads of Government Conference

The supreme organ of the Community is the Conference of Heads of Government, commonly called the Conference. It consists of in the case of Guyana, the Executive President, the Prime Ministers, and in the case of Montserrat, the Chief Minister. It is the final authority of the Community and determines policy. It is responsible for the conclusion of treaties on behalf of the Community and for entering into relationships between the Community and international organizations and States. The Conference is also responsible for making the financial arrangements to meet the expenses of the Community but has delegated this function to the Common Market Council. Decisions of the Conference are generally taken unanimously.

Common Market Council

- the principal organ of the Common Market. It consists of a Minister of Government designated by each Member State. Council is responsible for the development and smooth running of the Common Market, and for the settlement of any problems arising out of its functioning. However, Conference may issue directives to Council. Also usually takes decisions unanimously.

Institutions

There are several institutions of the Caribbean Community responsible for formulating policies and performing functions in relation to co-operation in services such as education, health, labour matters and foreign policy. Each Member State is represented on each Institution by a Minister of Government of the Member State. The Institutions are:

Conference of Ministers responsible for Education

Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for **Science and Technology**

Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for **Foreign Affairs**

Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for **Agriculture**

Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for **Mines, Energy and Natural Resources**

Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for **Industry**

Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for **Transport**

Standing Committee of Minister responsible for **Finance**

Standing Committee of Minister responsible for **Labour**

Associate Institutions

Under the Treaty, the following bodies are Associate Institutions of the Community:

Caribbean Development Bank
Caribbean Examination Council
Caribbean Meteorological Organization
Council of Legal Education
University of Guyana
University of the West Indies
West Indies Shipping Corporation

Secretariat

The Caribbean Community Secretariat is organized into five divisions:

Trade and Agriculture
Economics and Industry
Functional Co-operation
Legal Division
General Services and Administration

The functions of the Secretariat are:

(a) to service meetings of the Community and of its Institutions or Committees as may from time to time be determined by the Conference;

(b) to take appropriate follow-up action on decisions made at such meetings;

(c) to initiate, arrange and carry out studies on questions of economic and functional co-opertion relating to the Region as a whole;

(d) to provide services to Member States at their request in respect of matters relating to the achievement of the objectives of the Community;

(e) to undertake any other duties which may be assigned to it by the Conference or any of the Institutions of the Community.

Caribbean Community Secretariat, April 1987