

CARICOM Secretariat, Georgetown, Guyana

17 August 1998

CARIBBEAN LEADERS WILL MEET IN SANTO DOMINGO

Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the President of Cuba will meet with the President of the Dominican Republic in Santo Domingo from Thursday, 20 August-Saturday, 22 August 1998.

His Excellency, President Leonel Fernandez is hosting the meeting during celebrations marking the 500th anniversary of the founding of the city of Santo Domingo and will also host a dinner in commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which established CARICOM.

CARICOM and the Dominican Republic are expected to sign a Free Trade Agreement during the meeting.

The business sessions of the three day meeting will see the leaders taking a final look, as a group, at the Region's negotiating position as part of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of countries that will begin formal negotiations with the European Union (EU) next month, September, for a post Lome IV Agreement. Lome IV is the trade and aid arrangement between the EU and the ACP which comes to an end in the year 2000. Cuba has applied to become a member of the ACP.

Also listed on the agenda is an exchange of views on the commencement of negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA, first mooted at the inaugural Summit of the Americas in 1994, envisions the establishment of a trade bloc encompassing the Caribbean, North, South and Central America by the year 2005.

The Heads of State and Government will also discuss Regional issues including a strategic alliance between the Caribbean and Central America; a Regional response to Globalisation; Democracy, Governance and Social Needs; Relations with North America and Environmental Sustainability and Equitable Economic Growth in the Region.

Discussions will also take place on a Regional approach to the proposed European Union/Latin American and Caribbean Summit scheduled for May 1999 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.