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## FEATURED Q&A

# Has Caricom Set the Right Course for the Caribbean's Future?



Caribbean leaders including Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley of Barbados, Andrew Holness of Jamaica and Timothy Harris of St. Kitts & Nevis (L-R) met earlier this month to discuss regional issues at a meeting of the Caribbean Community, or Caricom. // Photo: Caricom.

**Q** Heads of government from throughout the Caribbean gathered earlier this month in Jamaica for the 39th Regular Meeting of the Caribbean Community, or Caricom. The leaders discussed strategies for bolstering security and fighting crime, disaster management, climate change, immigration and economic development. What were the main accomplishments of the meeting? What resulted from the presence of non-Caricom heads of state Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Chilean President Sebastián Piñera at the meeting? What are the most critical issues currently facing the Caribbean, and do the region's leaders have the right plans to tackle them?

**A** Ronald Sanders, ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the Organization of American States: "The main achievement of the meeting was a renewed commitment to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME).

The prime minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, will hold monthly meetings with officials of the Caricom Secretariat, providing important oversight and allowing for political action to improve implementation, long a hindrance to the integration process. A special meeting of leaders will be held in November to focus exclusively on the CSME. There are many contentious issues to be faced. The willingness to dedicate a meeting to deal exclusively with the matter is a positive sign. Cuba and Caricom countries have had a strong co-operative relationship since 1972. The relations with Cuba were dominated by the leadership of the Castro brothers—Fidel and Raúl—over the 46 years that followed. It was important that Caricom leaders and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel get the measure of each

Continued on page 3

## TODAY'S NEWS

### ECONOMIC

## López Obrador Seeks Cooperation in Letter to Trump

Mexican President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador told U.S. President Donald Trump in a letter that he wants "a new stage in U.S.-Mexico relations."

Page 2

### BUSINESS

## GE Transportation to Provide Chile Five Locomotives

The Chicago-based manufacturer will provide the locomotives next year. The deal is GE Transportation's first such order in the South American country.

Page 3

### POLITICAL

## Parties Select Presidential Candidates in Brazil

Brazilian political parties began officially selecting their presidential candidates ahead of the country's October election. Among them was Ciro Gomes of the leftist Democratic Labor Party.

Page 2



Gomes // File Photo: Brazilian Government.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Parties Begin Selecting Presidential Candidates in Brazil

Brazilian presidential parties on Friday began officially selecting their candidates for this October's presidential election, including Ciro Gomes of the leftist Democratic Labor Party, O Estado de S.Paulo reported. Gomes was the first candidate to be confirmed in a party convention ahead of the Oct. 7 election, and 500 members of his party confirmed his candidacy in a voice vote, The Wall Street Journal reported. "Brazil is a great nation and has resources to ensure its people live a happy life," Gomes said in accepting the nomination. "But the people have already given everything they have ... It's time for the government and the rich to give their share." Gomes' stance on economic and business issues have rattled investors, however. Earlier in the week, Gomes, a former finance minister, state governor and member of Congress, sent aircraft manufacturer Boeing a letter asking it to scrap its recent deal with Embraer, citing national security concerns. Earlier this month, the companies announced a \$3.8 billion deal for Chicago-based Boeing to acquire the Brazilian aircraft manufacturer's commercial airplane and services business. Brazilian President Michel Temer is expected to approve the deal later this year. Critics of Gomes also fear that he could reverse efforts to plug the government's budget deficit if elected president. On Sunday, far-right presidential hopeful Jair Bolsonaro officially launched his campaign. Bolsonaro, a former army captain leads in polls that exclude former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who was jailed in April following his conviction on corruption charges. Bolsonaro has insulted groups including gays, blacks and women. He softened some of his incendiary stances with a more inclusive tone, but blasted Brazil's political center, Reuters reported. He kicked off his campaign after centrist parties backed former São Paulo Governor Geraldo Alckmin. "Once again, thank you Geraldo Alckmin for uniting the scum of Brazilian

politics," said Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro, who has pledged to fight corruption and loosen gun controls, spoke to a rowdy crowd of about 3,000 supporters in Rio de Janeiro, which has been beset by high levels of violent crime. Bolsonaro has the backing of a small fringe party, which will give him little free time for advertising his campaign. "We don't have a big party. We don't have election funding. We don't have television time. But we have what the others don't have, which is you, the Brazilian people," Bolsonaro told supporters.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## López Obrador Seeks Cooperation in Letter to Trump

Mexican president-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Sunday made public a letter he sent to U.S. President Donald Trump calling for the two countries to "begin a new stage in U.S.-Mexico relations." U.S. cabinet officials who met with López Obrador in Mexico City on July 13 brought the letter to the U.S. president, El Economista reported. In the letter, López



López Obrador // File Photo: Notimex.

Obrador proposes cooperation on trade, migration, economic development and security. He highlights the importance of making "an effort" to conclude NAFTA renegotiations, expressing concern about slowed investment in the medium and long term, which would affect Mexico's economic growth. Talks on the 1994 trade deal will restart on Thursday in Washington, where a representative of López Obrador will join the Mexican delegation. Mexico's chief trade

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Former FARC Rebels Take Seats in Colombian Congress

Former FARC rebels took their seats Friday as lawmakers as a new session of the country's Congress was sworn in, Reuters reported. Under the terms of the guerrilla group's 2016 peace accord with the government, the FARC was awarded 10 seats in Congress through 2026. In his final address to Congress before leaving office Aug. 7, President Juan Manuel Santos called on Colombians to protect the peace deal.

## Ecuador May Evict Assange From Embassy as Early as Next Week

Ecuador appears to be moving ahead with plans to end its asylum protection for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, USA Today reported. Ecuador will reportedly turn him over to British authorities as soon as next week. Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden where he was wanted on sexual assault and rape charges. Sweden has since dropped its investigation, but Assange has remained in the embassy for fear that the United States could seek his extradition over the leak of classified documents.

## Zeballos Takes Office as Peru's Justice Minister

Peru's new justice minister, Vicente Zeballos, took office Saturday, Reuters reported. Zeballos replaced Salvador Heresi, whom President Martín Vizcarra fired after local media released audio recordings that appear to show Heresi discussing a legislative proposal with Judge César Hinostroza, who is accused of influence peddling. Heresi has denied wrongdoing. Zeballos left the ruling party last year over President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski's decision to pardon former President Alberto Fujimori.

negotiator, Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo, last week said Mexican negotiators will aim to agree on a preliminary deal by the end of August so that the U.S. Congress will have time to vote on it before the November midterm elections, The Wall Street Journal reported. On migration, López Obrador proposed an economic development plan that mainly focuses on creating jobs in Central American countries with the aim of stopping the flow of migrants into Mexico and across the U.S. border.

## BUSINESS NEWS

# GE Transportation to Provide Chile Five Locomotives

GE Transportation and Chilean private transport company Ferrocarril de Antofagasta, or FCAB, reached an agreement for the Chicago-based manufacturer to supply five diesel-electric locomotives next year, GE said in a statement Thursday. It is GE Transportation's first locomotive order in Chile, and comes as part of a move to increase its presence in South America, where "the market is growing" and "modernized infrastructure is a key driver in ... economic development," the company said. GE Transportation has participated in projects in Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina and Bolivia, and has seen locomotive and digital sales up by 40 percent in the region since 2015. "The acquisition of these five new GE locomotives, along with other brand-new rolling stock, trigger a step change on greenhouse gases emission reduction, improves safety ... and enhances productivity," said the general manager of FCAB, Mauricio Ortiz, according to the statement. Chilean president Sebastián Piñera, who took office in March, promised earlier this year to restructure the country's transportation to focus mostly on metro railways and to give a "great leap forward" in terms of electric transportation during his term, Radio Cooperativa reported in February.

## FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

other and to understand whether there would be any divergence of policies. The meeting underscored the continuing solidarity of Cuba and Caricom, including Caricom's support for the lifting of the U.S. economic and financial embargo against Cuba. Caricom and Cuba also agreed to increase trade and deepen their economic relations. Chilean President Sebastián Piñera continued the interest that previous Chilean administrations have had in the Caribbean. Chile has shown willingness to deepen economic relations, including trade. The exchange with Piñera was important to Caricom and positions Chile as a voice for the Caribbean in Latin America. Critical issues for the Caribbean are unemployment, climate change, high debt and an international environment that is unhelpful to their plight. Many leaders have privately indicated that the July meeting was one of the best in the last five years for agreeing regional action. Rather than being sidetracked by narrow national interests, they seem to have moved—albeit not leapt—to including regional approaches to the issues confronting them."

**A** **G. Philip Hughes, senior director at the White House Writers Group and former U.S. ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean:** "Caricom's 39th Heads of Government meeting was more 'business as usual' from an organization more challenged than ever by rapidly accelerating economic, technological and political changes outside the 'Community' and by worrying developments within. One might have thought that Jamaica's Golding Report, released earlier this year, on the future of Jamaica's relations with Caricom and Cariforum would have been a wake-up call, with its suggestion that Jamaica look for alternatives if substantive progress on making the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) real cannot be made along the lines of its 33 recommendations. (The report was blandly 'received' and will be 'taken into account'

in upcoming Caricom deliberations.) One might have thought that the disintegration of Venezuela—an event significant to most Caricom members thanks to the now-ended Petrocaribe program—might have merited some attention beyond a status report on the Venezuela-Guyana territorial dispute. One might have thought that the Trump administration's unpredictable policy moves and their reverberations in the international

“**Caricom's latest meeting seems to have merely indulged in more navel-gazing.**”

— G. Philip Hughes

arena might have also drawn some focus beyond a 'no names, please' swipe at unilaterally announced U.S. tariffs (which, in any case, don't target Caricom countries). Instead, Caricom's latest meeting seems to have merely indulged in more navel-gazing: focusing on resilient disaster management capabilities (a perennially important topic); noncommunicable diseases; its 'marijuana commission'; a regional strategy for development statistics; the constitutional relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas possessions and similar burning issues. Even on the CSME, the 'heads' managed little more than adopting a Protocol on Contingent Rights for migrants within the Community—almost comically juxtaposed against their simultaneous adoption of 'Procedures on the Refusal of Entry of Community Nationals.' New Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel showed up and collected a ritual condemnation of the United States' Cuba embargo. (Chilean President Sebastián Piñera also attended but had nothing to condemn.) The impression of being irretrievably stuck—procedurally and in the past—is over-

Continued on page 4

## FEATURED Q&amp;A / Continued from page 3

whelming. Maybe Caricom's new chairman, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness, can wield the Golding Report like a cattle prod for Caricom to join the 21st century—but don't bet on it."

**A** **Anthony T. Bryan, nonresident senior associate at the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington and senior fellow at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad & Tobago:** "Caricom during its 53 years (including its precursor Carifta) has progressed from a free trade area into a customs union. But since 2006, what should have been a single market and economy (CSME) with free movement of capital and labor, and integrated fiscal policies, has stalled. So one of the main accomplishments of the meeting was the strong advocacy by newly elected and committed 'regionalist' political leaders such as Barbados' Mia Mottley, Jamaica's Andrew Holness and others to review and advance the CSME agenda—starting with a meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2018. The Caricom secretary general urged the leaders to do more and quickly. Collectively leaders identified red tape (not institutions), domestic political issues, delayed adoption of legal instruments and policy decisions, and no enforcement and accountability framework with which to encourage compliance, as implementation deficits. The free

movement of peoples, which could place undue economic burdens on the smallest states, is also a hurdle to deeper regional integration. The Chilean president attended to express Chile's interest in entering into a free trade agreement with Caricom, while

“One of the main accomplishments of the meeting was the strong advocacy ... to review and advance the CSME agenda.”

— Anthony T. Bryan

the new Cuban president engaged in the dialogue of issues of mutual importance to Cuba-Caricom relations that has existed since 1973. Overall, the meeting demonstrated that Caricom must reposition itself to navigate current and emerging regional and international issues. Perhaps the meeting did convey a genuine and renewed sense of seriousness and purpose by the leaders. Only time will tell; but many people across the region still remain more skeptical than hopeful.”

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gkuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gkuleta@thedialogue.org).*

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**Erik Brand**

Publisher  
[ebrand@thedialogue.org](mailto:ebrand@thedialogue.org)

**Gene Kuleta**

Editor  
[gkuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gkuleta@thedialogue.org)

**Anastasia Chacón González**

Reporter  
[achacon@thedialogue.org](mailto:achacon@thedialogue.org)



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Subscription inquiries are welcomed at [freetrial@thedialogue.org](mailto:freetrial@thedialogue.org)

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