

# *CARICOM conference gets underway on 45th founding anniversary*

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Kingston, July 4 (RHC)-- The 39th Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, opens Wednesday afternoon as the regional body marks the 45th anniversary of its establishment which took place on July 4, 1973.

In a press statement, CARICOM said that the heads of state will meet with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel during the gathering, noting that it will be "the first opportunity for CARICOM as a collective to engage their Cuban counterpart on CARICOM-Cuba relations and on issues of mutual importance."

The conference will also be attended by other newly-elected heads of state in the region, including the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, who was elected to office following the country's May 24th general elections. Chilean President Sebastian Piñera is also attending as a guest.

Some of the key issues to be discussed at the conference are crime and violence, disaster management and climate change as well as CARICOM's single market and economic policies. Some of the other issues on the agenda include the upcoming 2018 G-20 Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which will be the first to be held in South America.

Nearly 200 foreign officials are expected to attend the meeting, including the heads of state and other government officials, and their delegations, officials from other regional and hemispheric international bodies and institutions, as well as members of the diplomatic corps, both local and overseas, accredited by CARICOM.

For the first time in over a decade, all the 15 regional government heads who form the organization are expected to attend the summit. Preceding the opening ceremony, the new President of the Caribbean Court of Justice, Adrian Saunders, will be sworn in.

The Conference of Heads of Government is the supreme agency of the Caribbean Community and determines and provides its policy direction. Jamaica's hosting of the conference this year is keeping with the regular system of rotation within CARICOM.

The conference is taking place at the Convention Centre in Montego Bay, Jamaica, from July 4th until Friday, the 6th.

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