

# *Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez speaks at Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council*

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Havana, June 19 (RHC)-- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Bruno Rodríguez, intervened in the XXV Ordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), in which issues of regional interest were discussed, such as actions undertaken by the organization in tourism, trade, transport, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and sustainability of the Caribbean Sea.

The following is the full speech of the Cuban Foreign Minister:

Honourable Senator Dr. Jerome Walcott, J.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados

Dr. June Soomer, General Secretariat of the Association

Distinguished delegates and guests,

Your Excellencies:

I wish first of all to welcome the initiative of the Government of Barbados, in its capacity as Chairman of the Cabinet of the Association of Caribbean States, to convene this meeting.

The COVID-19, whose epicentre has moved to the United States and its effects are seriously threatening Latin America and the Caribbean, has generated a health crisis of enormous magnitude, threatening the lives of all and confirming the need for cooperation and solidarity to face the pandemic and the growing challenges arising from it.

The ACS generated actions aimed at coordinating work for the benefit of the health of our peoples. We highlight in particular the First Special Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Health on COVID-19 and the First Regional Technical Meeting.

These are times of solidarity and of understanding health as a right, a principle that encourages our country's collaboration in the face of emergencies. Cuba has responded to requests from various countries by sending Cuban health professionals and technicians to carry out assistance and advisory work in 16 ACS Member States, which, together with the Medical Brigades that had been in place for some time, brought the number of States of the Association to 20, with which we are now developing medical cooperation.

In addition to the challenge of preserving human life under pandemic conditions, there is also the need to reactivate the economies of our nations, following the abrupt decline in productive, economic and commercial activity; economies that have been hard hit by the international economic crisis, the effects of climate change, natural disasters and the overwhelming and unsustainable burden of foreign debt and the unjust international financial system.

Your Excellencies:

Even in this scenario, unilateral coercive measures continue to be applied against countries such as Venezuela and Nicaragua that cause humanitarian damage and make it impossible for governments to acquire medical equipment and drugs to treat the sick.

In the case of Cuba, the blockade has been tightened and a politically motivated campaign against Cuban medical cooperation is being stepped up, aimed at depriving hundreds of thousands of people of these services.

I would like to thank the Association and all its Member States for their opposition to the irrational, illegal and cruel policy of blockade against our people.

I reiterate Cuba's rejection of the unilateral lists and certifications that affect countries of the Association, just as it repudiates the inclusion of member States on the lists of non-cooperative jurisdictions and calls for a constructive dialogue in this regard.

We welcome the election of the Dominican Republic as President of the Board of Directors of the Council of Ministers and we thank the excellent leadership of the Prime Minister, Honourable Mia Mottley, and our friend and Chancellor Jerome Walcott.

I would also like to commend the effective performance of Dr. June Soomer and warmly welcome Engineer Rodolfo Sabonge as the new Secretary General, with the certainty that he will put his vast experience and capacity to good use in successfully fulfilling the mandates issued by our Heads of State and Government.

To those who are starting their period in such important responsibilities, we express our willingness to continue contributing to the Association. To those who are concluding, we reiterate our gratitude.

I am sure that this important meeting will contribute decisively to moving the Partnership forward. Cuba will continue to work for the unity, agreement and consolidation of our Association.

Thank you very much!

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